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THE ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

VOLUME III

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THE ESSAYS OF
Montaigne

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INTRODUCTIONS BY GRACE NORTON

VOLUME III

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ESSAYS OF MONTAIGNE

THE SECOND BOOK

(CONTINUED)

CHAPTER XIII

OF JUDGING THE DEATH OF OTHERS

THIS is one of the Essays that is injured by its *story-telling*. The first four or five pages are worth reading again and again. The second half is scarcely read with interest even once, because the *fifteen* narratives in those pages are not in themselves of much value, and they are not very illustrative of the real argument. Some of them are, to be sure, instances of calmness in facing death; but they are all concerned with *self-given* deaths.

WHEN we judge the steadiness of men in dying, which is unquestionably the act most worth notice in human life, one thing must be heeded: that we do not easily believe that we have reached that point. Few persons die convinced that it is their last hour; and there is no occasion when the delusion of hope assails us more. It does not cease dinning into the ear: "Others have surely been sicker than you without dying; your case is not so desperate as they think; and, at the worst, God has often performed greater miracles." And this occurs because we account ourselves as too important. It seems as if the universality of things were to some extent affected by our being brought to naught, and were in sympathy with our condition; forasmuch as our vision, changed from what it was, sees things likewise changed; and we believe that they are failing it,[1] in proportion as it is failing them; like those who travel by sea, in whose eyes the mountains, fields, towns, sky, and land move, and at the same rate as themselves.

(*b*) Provehimur portu, terræque urbesque recedunt.[2]

Who ever saw an old man who did not extol the past and decry the present, holding the world and the morals of mankind responsible for his wretchedness and his discontent?

[1] That is, "our vision."

[2] We sail forth from the harbour, and lands and cities recede. — Virgil, *Æneid*, III, 72.

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Jamque caput quassans grandis suspirat arator,
Et cum tempora temporibus præsentia confert
Præteritis, laudat fortunas sæpe parentis,
Et crepat antiquum genus ut pietate repletum.[1]

We drag every thing along with us.

(*a*) Whence it follows that we deem our death a weighty matter, and that it does not take place very simply, or without the solemn consultation of the stars — (*c*) *tot circa unum caput tumultuantes deos*.[2] (*a*) And we think so the more, the more highly we value ourselves. (*c*) How can so much learning be lost, with such great detriment, without special heed taken by the fates? Does so rare and exemplary a mind cost no more in the killing than a commonplace and useless one? This life, which covers so many other lives, upon which so many other lives depend, which employs so many people in its service, and fills so large a place — is it cast out of its place, like that which holds by its single tie? No one of us sufficiently feels that he is only himself. (*a*) From this sprang these words of Cæsar to his pilot — words more turgid than the waves that threatened him: —

Italiam si, cœlo authore, recusas,
Me pete; sola tibi causa hæc est justa timoris,
Vectorem non nosse tuum; perrumpe procellas,
Tutela secure mei.[3]

And these: —

Credit jam digna pericula Cæsar
Fatis esse suis. Tantusque evertere, dixit,
Me superis labor est, parva quem puppe sedentem
Tam magno petiere mari?[4]

[1] And now the aged ploughman shakes his head and sighs; and when he compares present times with times past, he often praises his father's fortune, and prates about the men of old, rich in piety. — Lucretius, II, 1164, 1166–68.

[2] So many gods excited regarding one man. — Seneca, *Suasoriæ*, I, 4.

[3] If you shrink from Italy under the authority of heaven, go thither by my authority; your just ground for timidity is only that you know not who is your passenger. Dash through the storm, confident in my protection. — Lucan, V, 579.

[4] Cæsar now believed the peril to be worthy of his destiny. "Is it," he said, "so mighty a task for the gods to overthrow me? Does it need so great a sea against this man sitting in a little bark?" — Idem, V, 653.

(*b*) And that general delusion, that the sun veiled its face in mourning a whole year for his death: —

> Ille etiam, extincto miseratus Cæsare Romam,
> Cum caput obscura nitidum ferrugine texit; [1]

and a thousand similar ones, by which the world allows itself to be so easily deceived, believing that our interests affect heaven, (*c*) and that its infinitude is concerned with paltry doings.[2] *Non tanta cœlo societas nobiscum est, ut nostro fato mortalis sit ille quoque siderum fulgor.*[3]

(*a*) Now, to decide that there is resolution and firmness in him who does not yet believe himself to be certainly in danger, however the fact may be, is not reasonable; and it is not enough that he dies in that attitude, since he assumed it to produce precisely this effect. It occurs with the greater number of men, that they strengthen their bearing and their words in order to gain esteem thereby, which they hope to possess while still living. (*c*) Of all those whom I have seen die, chance has disposed their bearing, not their own purpose.[4] (*a*) And even regarding those persons who in old days made way with themselves, there is much to discriminate, according as it was by a sudden or a lingering death. That cruel Roman emperor said of his prisoners that he wished to make them feel death; and if one of them killed himself in prison, he said, "That man has escaped me." [5] He desired to stretch death out, and to cause it to be felt by torture.

> (*b*) Vidimus et toto quamvis in corpore cæso
> Nil animæ letale datum, moremque nefandæ
> Durum sævitiæ pereuntis parcere morti.[6]

[1] Even he, when Cæsar was slain, had pity on Rome, and veiled his luminous head with solemn observances. — Virgil, *Georgics*, I, 466.

[2] In 1580 to 1588: *que le pois de nos interests altere aussi le ciel, et qu'un grand Roy lui couste plus à tuer qu'une puce.*

[3] Not so close is the relation between heaven and us, that our mortality is that also of the brightness of the stars. — Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, II, 8.

[4] That is, regarding their "resolution and firmness." He seems, for the moment, to have forgotten La Boëtie.

[5] These were common illustrations, in Montaigne's day, of cruelty. The first is reported by Suetonius of Caligula, the second, of Tiberius.

[6] We have seen a body slashed all over, but not given the mortal stroke, and prevented from dying by horrible methods of severe cruelty. — Lucan, IV, 178.

(*a*) In truth, it is no very difficult matter, when sound in body and composed in mind, to determine to kill oneself; it is very easy to swagger before coming to close quarters; so that the most effeminate man on earth, Heliogabalus, amid his basest debaucheries, carefully planned to put himself to death in a delicate way when the emergency should drive him to it; and to the end that his death might not belie the rest of his life, he built, for the express purpose, a costly tower from which to leap, the lower part and the front of which were sheathed with boards enriched with gold and precious stones; and also he had cords of gold and crimson silk made, wherewith to strangle himself; and a sword of gold forged, to run himself through; and kept poison in caskets of emerald and topaz, to poison himself, according as the desire should come upon him to choose from among all these ways of dying; [1]

(*b*) Impiger et fortis virtute coacta.[2]

(*a*) But, as for him, the effeminacy of his preparations makes it more probable that his heart would have failed him, had he been brought to the reality.[3] But even of those who, more stout of heart, have been undaunted in performance, we must examine, I say, whether it was done with a blow which gave no time to feel its effect; for it may be questioned whether, upon seeing life ebb away little by little, the sensations of the body commingling with those of the soul, if the means of repenting had presented itself, there would have been found steadfastness and persistence in so perilous a purpose.

In Cæsar's civil wars, Lucius Domitius, taken prisoner in the Abruzzi, having poisoned himself, afterward repented of his act.[4] It has happened in our days that a certain man, being resolved to die, and at his first attempt not having struck deep enough, the sensitiveness of the flesh staying his arm, wounded himself twice or thrice again very severely,

[1] See Lampridius, *Life of Heliogabalus*.

[2] Prompt and courageous from necessity. — Lucan, IV, 798.

[3] *Que le nez lui eut saignê, qui l'en eut mis au propre.*

[4] See Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar*. The text has *la Prusse*, an evident misprint for *l'Abruzze*. In his *Journal de Voyage*, Montaigne wrote *Brusse*.

but could never force himself to drive the blow home. (*c*) When Plantius Silvanus was under trial, Urgulania, his grandmother, sent him a dagger, with which, not having the courage to kill himself, he had his servants cut his veins.[1] (*b*) In the time of Tiberius, Albucilla, trying to kill herself, struck too gently and gave her enemies an opportunity to imprison her and put her to death in their way.[2] The same did Demosthenes,[3] after his defeat in Sicily. (*c*) And C. Fimbria, having struck himself too feebly, prevailed on his servant to despatch him.[4] On the other hand, Ostorius, unable to make use of his own arm, disdained to employ that of his servant otherwise than to hold the dagger straight and firm, and he, flinging himself forward, thrust his breast against it and ran himself through.[5] (*a*) It is, in truth, a meat that he who has not a well-prepared gullet [6] must gulp down without chewing; but the Emperor Adrianus had his doctor mark and circumscribe around his pap exactly the mortal spot at which the man must aim to whom he should give it in charge to kill him.[7]

It was from such considerations that Cæsar, when he was asked what kind of death he thought most desirable, replied, "The least premeditated and the quickest." [8] (*b*) If Cæsar dared to say this, it is no greater cowardice in me to believe it. (*a*) A quick death, says Pliny, is the supreme fortune of human life.[9] It is grievous to them[10] to recognise death. No one can call himself undaunted by death who fears to argue with it,[11] and who can not meet it with his eyes open. They who are seen, at their executions, to go rapidly to their end, and hasten and urge forward the final act, do this, not from resolution: they want to get rid of

[1] See Tacitus, *Annals*, IV, 22.
[2] See *Ibid.*, VI, 48.
[3] *Le capitaine Demosthenes.* See Plutarch, *Life of Nicias.*
[4] See Appian, *De Bello Mithridatico.*
[5] See Tacitus, *Annals*, XVI, 15.
[6] *Qui n'a le gosier ferré à glace* (rough-shod).
[7] See Xiphilin, *Life of Adrianus.*
[8] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar;* Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.
[9] See the *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 53.
[10] That is, to men.
[11] *Qui craint à la marchander.* Littré interprets this: *qui se hâte de mourir.*

time to consider it. The being dead does not distress them, but very much the dying.

Emori nolo, sed me esse mortuum nihili æstimo.[1]

This is a degree of firmness which I have found by experience I could attain to,[2] like those who throw themselves into danger as into the sea, with their eyes shut.

(*c*) There is nothing, to my thinking, more resplendent in the life of Socrates than the having for thirty long days meditated upon his death sentence; the having accepted it all that time with a very confident hope, without excitement, without change, and with a succession of deeds and words rather lowered and careless in tone, than strained and heightened by the weight of such a cogitation.[3]

(*a*) That Pomponius Atticus to whom Cicero wrote letters, being ill, summoned Agrippa, his son-in-law, and two or three other friends of his, and said to them that, having found that he gained nothing by trying to be cured, and that all he did to prolong his life prolonged also, and increased, his suffering, he had determined to put an end to the one and the other, begging them to approve his determination and, at the worst, not to waste their pains in dissuading him from it. Now, having chosen to kill himself by fasting, lo! his disease was cured by this circumstance: the remedy that he employed to do away with himself restored him to health. The physicians and his friends, gladdened by such a happy result and rejoicing with him thereat, found themselves greatly mistaken; for it was not possible for them to make him change his purpose because of this, he saying that, whether or no, he must cross the line some day and, being so near it, he desired to avoid the trouble of beginning again another time.[4] This man, having regarded death at leisure, not only is not discouraged from meeting it, but is frantic to do so; for, being satisfied about that for which he had entered into the fight, he daringly spurs himself on to see the end of it. It is very much more than having

[1] I do not wish to die; but to be dead, I make no account of. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 8; translation of a verse of Epicharmus.

[2] See Book II, chap. 6 (Vol. II, pp. 96–98).

[3] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, IV, 8.

[4] See Cornelius Nepos, *Life of Atticus*, XXII.

no fear of death, to desire to taste it and learn its flavour. (*c*) The story of the philosopher Cleanthes is much the same. His gums were swollen and decayed; the physicians advised him to be extremely abstinent. Having fasted two days, he was so much better that they pronounced him cured, and permitted him to return to his wonted manner of living. He, on the contrary, having already tasted some sweetness in his failure of strength, determined to take no backward step, and to cross the line which he had nearly approached.[1]

(*a*) Tullius Marcellinus, a young Roman, wishing to anticipate the hour of his destiny, in order to rid himself of a disease which tormented him more than he was willing to endure, although the physicians promised him a certain, if not a very rapid, cure, summoned his friends to deliberate about this. Some, says Seneca, gave him the advice which, from cowardice, they themselves would have taken; the others, to please him, that which they thought would be most agreeable to him. But a Stoic spoke thus to him: "Do not exert yourself, Marcellinus, as if you were deliberating about something of importance; it is no great matter to live — your servants and the beasts live; but it is a great matter to die worthily, wisely, and firmly. Think how long you have been doing the same thing: eating, drinking, sleeping; drinking, sleeping, and eating. We revolve incessantly in this circle; not only disagreeable and unbearable circumstances, but the mere satiety of living, make us long for death." Marcellinus had need, not of a man to advise him, but of a man to help him. His servants were afraid to meddle in the affair; but this philosopher made them understand that those of a man's household are suspected only when there is some doubt whether the master's death has been voluntary; otherwise, that it would be as bad an example to prevent him from killing himself as to kill him, because

Invitum qui servat idem, facit occidenti.[2]

Later, he advised Marcellinus that just as, when our repasts are ended, the dessert from the table is given to those who serve, so, when life is at an end, it would not be unbecoming

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Cleanthes*.

[2] He who against a man's will preserves his life does the same thing as if he killed him. — Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 467.

to distribute some thing to those who have ministered to us. Now, Marcellinus was open-hearted and liberal; he caused money to be bestowed on his servants and consoled them. For all else, there was no need either of iron or blood; he undertook to depart from this life, not to flee from it; not to escape death, but to experience it. And, to give himself time to deal with it, he refused all nourishment; and on the third day after, having had himself bathed in warm water, he failed little by little, and not without some pleasure, as he said.[1] In truth, they who have had these faintnesses that come from weakness say that they feel no suffering in them, indeed, rather some pleasure, as of a passage into sleep and rest.

We see in these examples deaths studied and weighed. But to the end that Cato alone might furnish the perfect pattern of courage, it seems that his kind fate weakened the hand with which he dealt himself the blow, so that he might have opportunity to meet death face to face, and embrace it, his courage strengthening instead of weakening in danger. And if it had been for me to represent him in his most superb attitude, it would have been when, all covered with blood, he tore out his entrails, rather than with sword in hand, as did the statuaries of his time.[2] For that second murder was much more savage than the first.

CHAPTER XIV

HOW OUR MIND IS HINDERED BY ITSELF

This Essay opens with the presentation of the sophism known as "Buridan's Ass," which was a sort of example that was made use of for a very long time in the Schools. Buridan was one of the most renowned philosophers of the fourteenth century, but what exactly his ass originally was, is uncertain; it may possibly in his own day have been connected either with the Pons Asinorum of the logicians, or with some other ancient quibble. Bayle, one of the most competent authorities, declares that he could never find any one who could explain it. His guesses about it are founded on the belief that has long prevailed, that

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 77.5–9.

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Cato of Utica;* Seneca, *De Providentia*, II.

"Buridan's Ass" represented precisely the state of mind described by Montaigne — "a mind exactly balanced between two similar desires."

The way in which Montaigne extricates us from the difficulty begs the question with delightful and characteristic common sense; but how annoying his so cutting the knot must have been to Pascal, who revenged himself by calling his reference, a few lines farther on, to the squaring of the circle, "ignorant"!

IT is an amusing fancy to imagine a mind exactly balanced between two similar desires. For it is indubitable that it will never make a choice, because comparison and selection imply inequality of value; and if we were placed between the bottle and the ham, with equal appetite for drink and food, there would be, doubtless, no help save to die of thirst and hunger. To be prepared for this mishap, the Stoics, when they are asked whence comes, in our soul, the choosing between two not differing things, and what the reason is that, from a large number of crowns, we take one rather than another, all being alike and there being nothing about them which inclines us to preference, make answer that this movement of the soul is out of the ordinary and is irregular, coming to us from an external, accidental, and fortuitous impulsion.[1] It might rather be said, it seems to me, that nothing presents itself to us in which there is not some difference, however slight it may be; and that, either to the sight or to the touch, there is always something additional which attracts us, although it be imperceptibly. In like manner, if we imagine a pack-thread equally strong throughout, it is more than impossible[2] that it should break; for where would you have the fracture[3] begin? and to break everywhere at the same moment, that is not conceivable. If one joined to all this the geometrical propositions which, by the infallibility of their demonstrations, prove the contained to be greater than the container, the centre as great as its circumference, and which find two lines constantly approaching each other and never able to meet, and the philosopher's stone, and the squaring of the circle, wherein reasoning and fact are so opposed, one might

[1] See Plutarch, *Contradictions of the Stoics.*

[2] *Il est impossible de toute impossibilité.*

[3] *La faucée.*

perchance derive therefrom some arguments to support that bold saying of Pliny: *Solum certum nihil esse certi, et homine nihil miserius aut superbius.*[1]

CHAPTER XV

THAT DESIRE IS INCREASED IN US BY DIFFICULTY

This is one of the Essays which even a familiar reader of Montaigne would find it difficult to give a résumé of, from memory; and perhaps a safe inference from this is that it is one of the least important. There is one interesting passage in it, the last two pages — autobiographical — added in 1595. The rest is fifteen years or more older in date. It keeps very close to the outline of its title; and the subject, an interesting one from the psychological point of view, is but little so when considered only superficially and anecdotically.

THERE is no statement which has not its opposite, says the wisest party of philosophers.[2] I was recently ruminating this other notable saying, which one of the ancients brings forward as a reason for contempt of life: No good thing can bring us pleasure, if it be not one for whose loss we are prepared:[3] (*c*) *in æquo est dolor amissæ rei, et timor amittendæ;*[4] (*a*) meaning to prove thereby that the possession of life can not be truly pleasurable to us if we are in fear of losing its enjoyments. It might, however, be said, on the other hand, that we clasp and embrace this good thing so much the more closely and with the more affection, as we see it to be less assured, and fear that it may be taken from us. For it is clearly to be per-

[1] The sole certainty is that nothing is certain, and nothing more miserable or more proud than man. — Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, II, 7. In 1580 to 1588, this sentence is translated thus: *qu'il n'est certain que l'incertitude, et rien plus miserable et plus fier que l'homme.* In its Latin form, it was inscribed on the beams of Montaigne's library.

[2] The Pyrrhonians. See Sextus Empiricus, *Hypot.*, I, 6.

[3] See Seneca, *Epistle* 4.6.

[4] Equal in pain are the loss of a thing and the fear of losing it.—Idem, *Epistle* 98.6.

ceived that, as fire is sharper from the presence of cold, so our will is sharpened by contention, —

(*b*) Si nunquam Danaën habuisset ahenea turris,
Non esset Danaë de Jove facta parens,[1] —

(*a*) and that there is nothing so naturally opposed to our enjoyment as the satiety that comes from ease, and nothing that so intensifies our enjoyment as rarity and difficulty. *Omnium rerum voluptas ipso quo debet fugare periculo crescit.*[2]

Galla, nega; satiatur amor, nisi gaudia torquent.[3]

Pour tenir l'amour en haleine, Licurgue ordonna que les mariez de Lacedemone ne se pourroient pratiquer qu'à la desrobée, et que ce seroit pareille honte de les rencontrer couchés ensemble, qu'avecques d'autres.[4] La difficulté des assignations, le dangier des surprises, la honte du lendemain, —

et languor, et silentium,
Et latere petitus imo spiritus,[5] —

c'est ce qui donne pointe à la sauce. (*c*) Combien de jeus tres lascivement plaisans naissent de l'honneste et vergongneuse maniere de parler des ouvrages de l'amour! (*a*) La volupté mesme cerche à s'irriter par la douleur. Elle est bien plus sucrée quand elle cuit et quand elle escorche. La courtisane Flora disoit n'avoir jamais couché avecques Pompeius, qu'elle ne luy eut faict porter les marques de ses morsures.[6]

Quod petiere premunt arcte, faciuntque dolorem
Corporis, et dentes inlidunt sæpe labellis;
Et stimuli subsunt, qui instigant lædere id ipsum,
Quodcunque est, rabies unde illæ germina surgunt.[7]

[1] If Danaë had not been shut up in a brazen tower, she would not have been made a mother by Jove. — Ovid, *Amores*, II, 19.27.

[2] Peril increases in all things the very pleasure that we ought to avoid. — Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, VII, 9.

[3] Galla, deny me; love is cloyed unless joys torment. — Martial, IV, 37.

[4] See Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*.

[5] Horace, *Epodes*, XI, 9.

[6] See Plutarch, *Life of Pompey*.

[7] Lucretius, IV, 1079, 1080, 1082, 1083.

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This is the same everywhere; difficulty gives value to things. (*b*) They of the March of Ancona make their vows more readily to Saint-Jacques,[1] and they of Galicia to Our Lady of Loretto; at Liége they make very much of the Baths of Lucca, and in Tuscany of those of Aspa;[2] there are scarcely any Romans to be seen in the fencing-school at Rome, which is full of Frenchmen. The great Cato, like ourselves, found that he did not care for his wife so long as she was his, and desired her when she belonged to another.[3] (*c*) J'ay chassé au haras un vieux cheval duquel, à la sentur des jumens, on ne pouvoit venir à bout. La facilité l'a incontinant saoulé envers les sienes; mais, envers les estrangeres et la premiere qui passe le long de son pastis, il revient à ses importuns hannissemens et à ses chaleurs furieuses comme devant.

(*a*) Our appetite disdains and passes by what is at its hand, to run after what it has not:

Transvolat in medio posita, et fugientia captat.[4]

To forbid us any thing is to give us a desire for it:

(*b*) nisi tu servare puellam
Incipis, incipiet desinere esse mea.[5]

(*a*) To give it to us completely is to create in us contempt for it. Want and abundance meet with like mishap;

Tibi quod superest, mihi quod desit, dolet.[6]

[1] That is, to Saint James of Compostella, in Galicia.

[2] Spa, near Liége.

[3] "What Montaigne says here with regard to the transaction of Cato's wife, Marcia, becoming, with his consent, the wife of Hortensius, and his receiving her later again as his own wife, would seem to be merely a personal opinion. Plutarch in his *Life of Cato* says nothing to suggest this view. Cæsar, in his attack on Cato, accused him of this being a matter of avarice." — Grace Norton, *Le Plutarque de Montaigne*, p. 127.

[4] It neglects what is at hand, and would seize what escapes from it. — Horace, *Satires*, I, 2.108.

[5] Unless you begin to guard your mistress, she will begin to cease to be mine. — Ovid, *Amores*, II, 19.47.

[6] What is too much troubles you, what is lacking troubles me. — Terence, *Phormio*, I, 3.10. The original text is, —

Aliis quia desit quod amant ægre est,
Tibi quod superest, dolet.

Desire and possession cause us equal discomfort.[1] The aloofness of one's mistress is vexatious, but, in truth, ease and facility of access are even more so; dissatisfaction and wrath are born of the esteem in which we hold the desired object, sharpen love, and rekindle it; but satiety engenders distaste; it is a sluggish, bemused, weary, and drowsy passion.

(*b*) Si qua volet regnare diu, contemnat amantem;[2]

contemnite, amantes,
Sic hodie veniet, si qua negavit heri.[3]

(*c*) Pourquoy inventa Poppæa de masquer les beautez de son visage, que pour les rencherir à ses amans?[4] (*a*)[5] Pourquoy a l'on voilé jusques au dessoubs des talons ces beautez que chacune desire montrer, que chacun desire voir? Pourquoy couvrent elles de tant d'empeschemens les uns sur les autres les parties ou loge principallement nostre desir et le leur? Et à quoy servent ces gros bastions, dequoy les nostres viennent d'armer leurs flancs, qu'à lurrer nostre appetit et nous attirer à elles en nous esloignant?

Et fugit ad salices, et se cupit ante videri.[6]

(*b*) Interdum tunica duxit operta moram.[7]

(*a*) A quoy sert l'art de cette honte virginalle? cette froideur rassise, cette contenance severe, cette profession d'ignorance des choses qu'elles sçavent mieux que nous qui les en instruisons, qu'à nous accroistre le desir de vaincre, gourmander et fouler à nostre appetit toute cette ceremonie et ces obstacles? Car il y a non seulement du plaisir, mais de la gloire encore, d'affolir et desbaucher cette molle douceur et cette pudeur enfantine, et de ranger à la mercy de nostre ardeur une gravité fiere et magistrale. C'est gloire,

[1] The text from this point to "drowsy passion" is an addition of 1582.

[2] She who would reign long, let her be disdainful to her lover. — Ovid, *Amores*, II, 19.33.

[3] Be disdainful, O lovers; then will she who denied you yesterday come to you to-day. — Propertius, II, 14.19.

[4] See Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII, 45.

[5] Another addition of 1582, to *foible et languissante* (p. 16), except the Latin quotation.

[6] Virgil, *Eclogues*, III, 65.

[7] Propertius, II, 15.6.

disent-ils, de triompher de la rigueur, de la modestie, de la chasteté et de la temperance; et qui desconseille aux dames ces parties là, il les trahit et soy-mesmes. Il faut croire que le cœur leur fremit d'effroy, que le son de nos mots blesse la pureté de leurs oreilles, qu'elles nous en haissent, et s'accordent à nostre importunité d'une force forcée. La beauté, toute puissante qu'elle est, n'a pas dequoy se faire savourer sans cette entremise. Voyez en Italie, où il y a plus de beauté à vendre, et de la plus fine, comment il faut qu'elle cherche d'autres moyens estrangers et d'autres arts pour se rendre aggreable; et si, à la verité, quoy qu'elle face, estant venale et publique, elle demeure foible et languissante. Even in valour, of two similar actions we none the less hold that to be the noblest and most worthy which offers the most difficulty and risk.

[1] It is the purpose of divine Providence to allow its holy church to be disturbed by so many troubles and storms as we see it to be, in order to awaken pious souls by this strife, and to rouse them from the slothfulness and sleep in which so long a period of tranquillity has immersed them. If we balance the loss that we have suffered in the number of those who have gone astray with the gain that accrues to us by having been given fresh spirit, and having our zeal and our strength revived by occasion of this combat, I know not if the advantage does not outweigh the injury.

We thought to tie more firmly the knot of our marriages by removing all means of dissolving them; but the knot of inclination and affection has been made light of and loosened in proportion as that of constraint has been tightened. And, on the other hand, that which so long held marriages at Rome in honour and security was the liberty of breaking them at will. They loved their wives the better because they might lose them; and with full permission for divorce, five hundred years and more passed before any man availed himself of it.[2]

Quod licet, ingratum est; quod non licet, acrius urit.[3]

[1] This paragraph was added in 1582.

[2] See Valerius Maximus, II, 1.4; Aulus Gellius, IV, 3.

[3] What is permitted is unattractive; what is not permitted the more ardently inflames. — Ovid, *Amores*, II, 19.3.

On this matter we might add the opinion of an ancient, that punishments whet vices rather than dull them;[1] (*b*) that they do not beget heedfulness to do well, — that is the work of reason and discipline, — but only heedfulness not to be surprised in ill-doing: —

Latius excisæ pestis contagia serpunt.[2]

(*a*) I know not whether it is true,[3] but this I know as a matter of experience, that no sort of government was ever amended thereby.[4] The ordering and regulation of morals depends upon some other method.[5]

(*c*) The Greek historians make mention of the Argippæans, neighbours to Scythia, who live with never so much as a stick or a club for offence; yet not only does no one attempt to attack them, but whoever can escape thither is in safety, because of their virtue and sanctity of life; and there is no man so daring as to lay hand on him. Recourse is had to them to settle the differences that arise amongst men elsewhere.[6] (*b*) There is a nation where the enclosure of the gardens and fields which it is desired to protect is done with a cotton string; [7] and this is much more sure and safe than our ditches and hedges.[8] (*c*) *Furem signata sollicitant. . . . Aperta effractarius præterit.*[9]

Perchance the ease of attack serves, among other conditions, to shield my house from the violence of our civil wars. Defence attracts the attempt, and defiance the offence. I have weakened the design of the soldiers, depriving their exploit of risk and of all manner of military glory, which is wont to serve them as pretext and excuse. A brave deed is always an honourable one in times when justice is dead. I

[1] See Seneca, *De Clementia*, I, 23.

[2] The plague-spot being cut out, the more widely the contagion spreads. — Rutilius, *Itinerarium*, I, 397.

[3] That is, whether it is a fact, an essential truth. This seems the only possible meaning of a very obscure sentence.

[4] That is, by punishments.

[5] The Essay ended here in 1580.

[6] See Herodotus, IV, 23.

[7] See Lopez de Gomara, *Histoire Générale des Indes*.

[8] The Essay ended here in 1588.

[9] Hidden things tempt the thief. . . . The housebreaker passes open doors. — Seneca, *Epistle* 68.4.

render the conquest of my house a dastardly and treacherous act. It is closed to no one who knocks. For all protection there is only a porter of old custom and ceremony, who is employed not so much to defend my door as to open it more courteously and graciously. I have no guard or sentinel other than what the stars keep for me. A gentleman mistakes in appearing to be in a state of defence unless he be completely so. He who is open on one side is open on all. Our fathers did not dream of building frontier strongholds. The means of assailing — that is to say, without artillery and without an army — and of taking our houses by surprise increases every day beyond the means of protection. Men's wits are universally whetted in that direction. Invasion concerns all men; not so defence: that concerns only the rich. My house was strong for the time when it was built. I have added nothing to it in that respect, and I should fear that its strength would turn against me; moreover, a season of peace will require houses to be unfortified. It is dangerous not to be able to regain them. And yet it is difficult to feel secure there. For in time of civil war, your servant may be of the party that you fear. And when religion serves as a pretext, even kinsfolk become untrustworthy under an appearance of justice. The public funds will not provide for our private garrisons; they would be exhausted by so doing. We have not the means to do it without ruining ourselves, or, more unfitly and harmfully, without ruining the common people. My loss of every thing would hardly be worse.[1] Then, too, suppose that you fail? Even your friends busy themselves, more than in pitying you, in blaming your lack of vigilance and forethought, and your ignorance or indifference in the duties of your [military] profession.

The fact that so many garrisoned houses have been destroyed, while this one stands, makes me suspect that they have been destroyed because they were defended. That gives the assailant both the desire and the right: all defence wears the aspect of war. If it be the will of God, some one

[1] *L'estate de ma perte ne seroit de guere pire.* That is, it would hardly be worse [for me?] to be ruined myself than to have the common people ruined.

may attack me; but at least I will not invite him. It is a place of refuge where I can be at rest from the wars. I try to withdraw this corner from the public storm, as I do another corner in my soul. Our war may change its shape as it will, multiply itself and diversify itself into new factions; for my part, I do not stir. Amid so many armed houses, I alone of my rank in France, so far as I know, have trusted entirely to heaven for the protection of mine. And I have never removed from it a silver spoon or a title deed. I prefer neither to be alarmed nor to escape by halves. If a full acknowledgement wins the divine favour, it will continue with me to the end; in any case I have already continued long enough to render my continuance noteworthy and fit to be recorded. How is that? It has been full thirty years.[1]

CHAPTER XVI

OF FAME[2]

This is one of the Emerson-like Essays, in which there is little or nothing to be commented on, every thing to be accepted; few pages that make one exclaim, "How admirable!" many that make one feel, "How wise!" The text of the whole is in the first page: "There is nothing so remote from reason, as for us to go in quest" of glory and honour; let us rather provide ourselves with more necessary possessions. It is true that there are advantages accompanying them; and even Epicurus himself, in the teeth of his own philosophy, could not but somewhat desire it, in the shape of after-death fame. Other philosophers have ranked it high; so high that they have maintained that "virtue itself is desirable only for the glory that always follows after it." How false an opinion! Let us receive from ourselves the law of well-doing. "Virtue is a very empty and valueless thing if it derives its recommendation from fame," especially since fame is the most fortuitous of things; "it is fate that confers fame on us."

The first paragraph after "Vera et sapiens" (page 25) is one of the *personal* touches inserted in 1595, and breaks the connection. The rest

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[1] Since the beginning of the civil commotions in 1560–1562. These concluding sentences have sometimes been taken to refer to Montaigne's age (he was born in 1533); but, as they were added after 1588, they undoubtedly mean that he had "continued" to live in an undefended house throughout the troublous period.

[2] *De la Gloire.*

of the page is interesting from its *military* note, and the next pages for their high feeling and vigorous expression.

Not only is reputation a mere matter of chance, but the voice of the multitude is the voice of ignorance, injustice, and inconstancy. Every man likes praise, but it is but outward wealth. Even the folly of liking to be talked of, no matter in what tone, is common. But what profits it? If public approbation served to make men or nations or rulers better, then, indeed, might the love of fame be cherished by legislators as other false opinions are; but — ?

The Essay closes with a word addressed to women, counselling them to distinguish, in this matter of reputation, the shadow from the substance (or, as he phrases it in the opening sentence of the Essay, the name from the thing), and to hold their virtue rather than their honour the protection of their chastity.

In fine, all persons of honour must feel that "the actions of virtue are too noble in themselves to seek other reward than from their own worth; and especially to seek it in the vanity of human judgements."

THERE is the name and the thing: the name is a word that denotes and signifies the thing; the name is not a part of the thing and has no substance; it is an extraneous matter added to the thing and outside of it. God, who is in himself complete plenitude and the sum of all perfection, can not in himself be amplified and increased; but his name can be amplified and increased by the blessing and praise which we bestow upon his exterior works. This praise, since we can not embody it in him, — inasmuch as he can have no accession of good, — we ascribe to his name, which is the thing apart from him nearest to him. Thus it is to God alone that glory and honour belong; and there is nothing so remote from reason as for us to go in quest of them for ourselves: for, being indigent and necessitous in ourselves, our essential nature being imperfect and having constantly need of amelioration, there is the ground where we should labour. We are, all, hollow and empty; it is not with wind and words that we should fill ourselves; we need more solid substance to amend us. A hungry man would be very foolish to seek to provide himself with a fine garment rather than with a good meal: we must speed to what is most urgent. As our familiar prayers say: *Gloria in excelsis Deo, et in terra pax hominibus.*[1]

[1] Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men. — *Luke*, II, 14.

We are in dearth of beauty, health, wisdom, virtue, and such essential qualities; let outward adornments be sought for after we have provided for necessary things. Theology treats this subject amply and more pertinently, but I am scarcely versed therein.

Chrysippus and Diogenes were the first and the most assured asserters of contempt of glory;[1] and they said that, among all pleasures, there was none so dangerous, or more to be shunned, than that which we derive from the approbation of others. Truly, experience makes us often perceive therein much harmful perfidiousness. Nothing so corrupts princes as flattery, nor is there any thing whereby bad men more readily gain favour with them; nor any panderism so fitted, and so commonly made use of, to corrupt the chastity of women as to feed them and delight them with their praises. (*b*) The first charm that the Sirens employed to beguile Ulysses was of this nature:

> Deça vers nous, deça, O treslouable Ulisse,
> Et le plus grand honneur dont la Grece fleurisse.[2]

(*a*) These philosophers said that all the glory of the world did not deserve that a man of understanding should even hold out his finger to obtain it.[3]

(*b*) Gloria quantalibet quid erit, si gloria tantum est?[4]

(*a*) I mean, for itself alone; for it often brings in its train many advantages, for the sake of which it may be desirable. It gains good-will for us; it causes us to be less exposed to the insults and injuries of others, and the like. This was also among the chief dogmas of Epicurus; for that precept of his sect, "Conceal thy life,"[5] which forbids men to burden

[1] Montaigne probably had in mind Cicero, *De Fin.*, III, 17, as he repeats Cicero's words a little later; but he goes far beyond what Cicero says.

[2] Come hither to us, hither, most praiseworthy Ulysses, the greatest honour that gives prosperity to Greece. — A translation — whose, is not known — of the *Odyssey*, XII, 184.

[3] See Cicero, *De Fin.*, III, 17.

[4] What is glory, however great it may be, if it be only glory? — Juvenal, VII, 81.

[5] See Plutarch, *Whether it were rightly said, Live concealed.*

themselves with public offices and negotiations, also presupposes necessarily that we despise glory, which is a form of approbation that the world bestows upon the actions which we openly perform. He who bids us conceal ourselves and have no care but of ourselves, and who does not wish us to be known to others, still less wishes us to be honoured and glorified by them. Therefore he counsels Idomeneus to regulate his actions in no wise by common opinion or reputation, unless it be to avoid the other accidental disadvantages that the contempt of men would bring upon him.[1]

These reflections are, in my judgement, infinitely true and reasonable. But we are, I know not how, twofold in ourselves, which is the reason that what we believe we do not believe, and that we can not free ourselves from what we condemn. Observe the last words of Epicurus, which he uttered when dying; noble words and worthy of such a philosopher, yet they have some hint of recommendation of his fame, some touch of that disposition which he had decried by his precepts. Here is a letter which he dictated a little before his last breath.[2]

EPICURUS to HERMACHUS, greeting.

Whilst I was passing the fortunate, and that the last, day of my life, I wrote this, enduring meanwhile such pain in the bladder and the intestines that nothing could have added to its intensity. But it was balanced in equal measure by the pleasure that the remembrance of my discoveries and my doctrines brought to my soul. Do thou now, as due to thy attachment from childhood to me and to philosophy, take upon thyself the protection of the children of Metrodorus.

Such was his letter, and what makes me infer that this pleasure that he says he feels in his soul in regard to his discoveries concerns in some degree the renown that he hoped to acquire from them after his death, is the provision of his will by which he desires that Aminomachus and Thimocrates, his heirs, shall furnish the cost of the celebration of his birthday in January of every year, which Hermachus

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 21.3, 4.

[2] See Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 30. Diogenes Laertius (*Life of Epicurus*) gives the same letter as addressed to Idomeneus.

shall arrange; and, further, of the outlay to be made on the twentieth of every month, for the entertainment of the philosophers, his intimates, who should assemble in honour of his memory and of Metrodorus.[1]

Carneades was the chief upholder of the contrary opinion, and maintained that glory was desirable for its own sake;[2] even as we gladly accept our posthumous children for their own sake, having no knowledge or enjoyment of them. This opinion has not failed to be the more generally followed, as are easily those which are most in accord with our inclinations. (*c*) Aristotle gives it the highest rank among external goods.[3] Avoid, as two vicious extremes, immoderation both in seeking it and in shunning it. (*a*) I believe that, if we had the books that Cicero wrote on this subject, he would tell us fine things about it; for he was so out of his wits with this passion that, if he had dared, he would, so I believe, have easily fallen into the extravagant doctrine into which others fell — that virtue itself is desirable only for the glory that always follows after it;[4]

> Paulum sepultæ distat inertiæ
> Celata virtus.[5]

This is so false an opinion that I am vexed that it ever entered the understanding of a man who had the honour of bearing the name of philosopher. If that were true, there would be no need to be virtuous save in public; and the actions of the soul, where is the true seat of virtue, we should have no reason to keep regular and orderly except so far as they might come to the knowledge of others.

(*c*) Is it, then, only a matter of erring discreetly and subtly? If you know, says Carneades, a serpent to be hidden in the spot where, unthinking, he is about to sit down by whose death you hope to profit, you do wickedly if you do not warn him thereof; and all the more, if your acts be known only to yourself.[6] If we do not of ourselves abide by

[1] See Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 31.
[2] See *Ibid.*, III, 17.
[3] See the *Nicomachæan Ethics*, II, 7.
[4] See Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 15.
[5] Unseen virtue differs little from forgotten slothfulness. — Horace, *Odes*, IV, 9.29.
[6] See Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 18.

the law of well-doing, if to us impunity is justice, to how many kinds of wickedness may we every day abandon ourselves! What Sextus Peducæus did, in faithfully rendering back that portion of his riches which Caius Plotius had entrusted to him with his sole knowledge,[1] and what I have likewise done often, I do not find to be so praiseworthy as I should find it execrable had he failed to do so. And I consider it well worth while and useful to bring to mind, in our days, the instance of Publius Sextilius Rufus, whom Cicero charges with having against his conscience received an inheritance, not only not contrary to law, but by virtue of the law itself.[2] And M. Crassus and Q. Hortensius, who, on account of their authority and power, having been named by a foreigner, because of certain legacies,[3] as joint inheritors under a forged will, to the end that by this means he might secure his own share in it, contented themselves with not being participators in the forgery, and did not refuse to profit by it, being sufficiently under cover if they were sheltered from the accusations, from witnesses, and from the laws.[4] *Meminerint deum se habere testem, id est* (*ut ego arbitror*) *mentem suam.*[5]

(*a*) Virtue is a very empty and valueless thing, if it derives its recommendation from fame. To no purpose should we undertake to make that hold a place apart, and disconnect it from fortune; for what is more fortuitous than reputation? (*c*) *Profecto fortuna in omni re dominatur; ea res cunctas ex libidine magis quam ex vero celebrat obscuratque.*[6]

[1] See Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 17. Caius had deposited with Sextus a legacy for his wife. On the death of Caius, Sextus went to the widow, who knew nothing of the transaction, and handed the legacy over to her.

[2] See *Ibid.* Quintus Fadius Gallus left his property to Publius Sextilius Rufus, stating in his will that he desired that the entire inheritance should pass through Sextilius to his (Fadius's) daughter. The Voconian laws excluded daughters from inheriting largely from their fathers. Sextilius denied that there was any such request, and added that he did not dare to disobey the Voconian law.

[3] *Pour certeines quotites.*

[4] See Cicero, *De Off.*, III, 18.

[5] Let them remember that they have God as witness; that is (to my thinking), in their own conscience. — *Ibid.*, III, 10.

[6] Assuredly fortune governs all matters; she, more from caprice than from truth, brings some things to honour and makes others of no account. — Sallust, *Catiline*, VIII, 1.

(*a*) To cause actions to be known and seen is the pure work of fortune. (*c*) It is fate that confers fame on us after the fashion of its inconsiderateness. I have very often seen it go in advance of merit, and often outstrip merit by a long distance. He who first bethought himself of the resemblance between a shadow and glory did better than he intended.[1] They are surpassingly vain things. It,[2] too, sometimes precedes its body, and sometimes greatly exceeds it in length. (*a*) They who teach gentlemen [3] to seek from valour only honour, (*c*) *quasi non sit honestum quod nobilitatum non sit*,[4] (*a*) what do they achieve thereby, save to instruct them never to risk themselves if they be not seen, and to take good heed that there be witnesses who can report news of their valour; whereas a thousand opportunities present themselves of well-doing without its being observed? How many brave individual deeds are buried in the tumult of a battle! Whoever employs himself in spying faults in others in such a confusion is scarcely very busy in it himself, and produces against himself the testimony that he gives of the conduct of his comrades. (*c*) *Vera et sapiens animi magnitudo honestum illud quod maxime naturam sequitur, in factis positum, non in gloria, judicat.*[5] All the glory that I claim from my life is having passed it tranquilly — tranquilly, not after the fashion of Metrodorus or Arcesilaus, or Aristippus, but after my own fashion. Since philosophy has been able to find no path to tranquillity which is open to all,[6] let every man seek it for himself!

(*a*) To what do Cæsar and Alexander owe the infinite greatness of their renown, but to Fortune? How many men has she brought to naught at the outset of their progress, of whom we have no knowledge, who came to it with spirit

[1] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 45.

[2] That is, glory.

[3] *La noblesse;* in 1580 to 1588, *nos gens de guerre.*

[4] As if it were not praiseworthy unless it were renowned. — Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 4. The original is: *honestum, quod etiamsi nobilitatum non sit, tamen honestum sit.*

[5] True and wise greatness of soul judges that to be worthy of praise and most according to nature which is connected with deeds, not with glory. — *Ibid.*, I, 19.

[6] *Qui fut bonne en commun.*

equal to theirs,[1] if the ill-luck of their fate had not stopped them short on the very threshold of their undertaking! In the course of so many and such extreme perils, I do not remember to have read that Cæsar was ever wounded; but of Hannibal I know that they say that he was, and of Scanderbeg.[2] Thousands have died from lesser perils than the least of those that he passed through. Numberless brave deeds must be lost unwitnessed before one comes to light. A man is not always on the top of a breach or in the forefront of an army, in sight of his general, as on a stage. A man is surprised between the hedge and moat; he must attempt fortune against a beggarly castle;[3] he must dislodge four miserable musketeers from a barn; he must part alone from his company, and alone set about an enterprise according as the necessity presents itself. And if we look closely, we shall find that experience proves that the least brilliant occasions are the most dangerous, and that, in the wars that have occurred in our days, more brave men have been lost in slight and unimportant occasions, and in the struggle for some paltry fort, than in worthy and honourable places.

(*c*) He who regards his death as ill employed if it happen not on some noteworthy occasion, instead of making his death illustrious, himself casts a shadow on his life, letting escape meanwhile many fitting occasions to hazard himself. And all fitting occasions are illustrious enough, every man's conscience trumpeting them sufficiently. *Gloria nostra est testimonium conscientiæ nostræ.*[4] (*a*) He who is a brave man only because he will be known for such, and because he will be more highly esteemed after it is known; he who has no desire to do well except in such way that his valour shall come to men's knowledge — he is not a man from whom can be obtained much service.

> Credo che'l resto di quel verno cose
> Facesse degne di tenerne conto;
> Ma fur sin' a quel tempo si nascose,

[1] That is, Cæsar's and Alexander's.

[2] "But of Hannibal," etc., was omitted in 1595.

[3] *Contre un poullaillier.*

[4] Our glory is the testimony of our conscience. — *II Corinthians*, I, 12.

Che non è colpa mia s'hor' non le conto;
Perche Orlando a far opre virtuose,
Piu ch'a narrarle poi, sempre era pronto,
Ne mai fu alcun' de li suoi fatti espresso,
Senon quando hebbe i testimonii apresso.[1]

A man must go to war as his duty, and expect from it that reward which can not fail all brave deeds, however hidden they may be — no, not even virtuous thoughts: the inward satisfaction that a well-ordered conscience reaps from well-doing. We must be valiant for ourselves, and for the advantage there is in having our courage established upon a firm base, secure against the attacks of fortune.

(*b*) Virtus, repulsæ nescia sordidæ,
Intaminatis fulget honoribus,
Nec sumit aut ponit secures
Arbitrio popularis auræ.[2]

(*a*) It is not for display that our soul should play her part, but for ourselves, within, where no eyes penetrate but our own; there she shields us from the fear of death, from suffering, and even from shame; there she strengthens us in the loss of our children, our friends, and our fortunes; and when the opportunity offers, she leads us also into the hazards of war. (*c*) *Non emolumento aliquo, sed ipsius honestatis decore.*[3] (*a*) This benefit is much greater and much more worth being desired and hoped for than honour and glory, which are nothing but a favourable judgement that others form of us.

(*b*) We must needs pick from out a whole nation a dozen men to judge about an acre of land; yet judgement of our

[1] I believe that, during the rest of that winter, he did things worthy of commemoration; but since that time they are so hidden that it is not my fault if I do not now tell of them; for Orlando was always ready to do noble deeds rather than narrate them; never were any of his exploits made known except when there were witnesses of them. — Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, XI, 81.

[2] Virtue, above all ignoble repulses, shines in spotless honours; she neither takes up nor lays down dignities at the gusts of popular favour. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 2.17.

[3] Not for any reward, but for the seemliness of honour itself. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, I, 10.

inclinations and our actions, the most difficult and most important matter there is, we entrust to the voice of the common people, and the rabble, the mother of ignorance, injustice, and inconstancy. (*c*) Is it reasonable to make the life of a wise man depend upon the judgement of fools?[1] *An quidquam stultius quam quos singulos contemnas, eos aliquid putare esse universos?*[2] (*b*) Whoever seeks to please them never has done; it is an indefinite mark that can not be hit.[3] (*c*) *Nihil tam inæstimabile est quam animi multitudinis.*[4] Demetrius said scoffingly of the voice of the people that he made no more account of the wind which issued forth from it above than of that which issued forth from it below.[5] This other goes further: *Ego hoc judico, si quando turpe non sit, tamen non esse non turpe, quum id a multitudine laudetur.*[6] (*b*) No skill, no activity of mind could conduct our steps in following a guide so errant and erratic. In this gale of confused rumors, of reports and common opinions that drive us on, no course can be laid down that is worth any thing. Let us not set before ourselves so floating and uncertain an end; let us follow persistently after reason; let public approval follow us on that road if it will; and as this depends altogether on fortune, we have no ground to hope for it more by another road than by that one. Even if I would not follow the right path because of its rightness, I would follow it because I have found by experience that, at the end of the reckoning, it is usually the most fortunate and most advantageous. (*c*) *Dedit hoc providentia hominibus munus, ut honesta magis juvarent.*[7] (*b*) The sailor of old spoke thus to Neptune in a great tempest: "O God, thou mayest save me

[1] See Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 15.

[2] Is any thing more foolish than to think that those whom as individuals you despise are something other when combined into one whole? — Idem, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 36.

[3] *C'est une bute qui n'a ny forme ny prise.*

[4] Nothing is so difficult to judge of as the minds of the multitude. — Livy, XXXI, 34.

[5] See Seneca, *Epistle* 91.19.

[6] I think that even if a thing is not base, it is, nevertheless, not *not* base, when it is praised by the multitude. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 15.

[7] Providence has given men this boon, that honourable deeds are the most profitable. — Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, I, 12.19.

if thou wilt; thou mayest destroy me if thou wilt; but still I will always hold my rudder true." [1] I have seen in my days a thousand active, two-faced, equivocating men,[2] whom no one doubted to be more worldly-wise than I, ruined where I was saved;

Risi successu posse carere dolos.[3]

(*c*) Paulus Æmilius, setting out on his glorious expedition to Macedonia, warned the Roman people above all things to restrain their tongues concerning his actions during his absence.[4] How great a hindrance in great affairs is the license of opinions! inasmuch as every one has not, in withstanding the common clamour, hostile and defamatory, the firmness of Fabius, who preferred to let his authority be mangled by men's idle fancies rather than to do his duty less well, with favourable repute and popular approval.[5]

(*b*) There is I know not what inborn satisfaction in knowing oneself to be praised; but we yield far too much to it.

Laudari haud metuam, neque enim mihi cornea fibra est;
Sed recti finemque extremumque esse recuso
Euge tuum et belle.[6]

(*a*) I care not so much what I am in another's judgement, as I care what I am in my own. I wish to be rich of myself, not by borrowing. Strangers see only external matters and appearances; every one can make a good shew outside, full within of trembling and terror. They do not see my heart, they see only my demeanour. We are right in discrediting the forms of pretence seen in war; for what is easier for a skilful man than to avoid dangers, and to swagger when his heart is full of cowardice? There are so many ways of shun-

[1] Cf. Seneca, *Epistle* 85.33: *Qui hoc potuit dicere, "Neptune, nunquam hanc navem nisi rectam," arti satisfecit;* see also Idem, *Consolatio ad Marciam*, VI.

[2] *Hommes soupples, mestis, ambigus.*

[3] I have laughed that cunning should lack success. — Ovid, *Heroides*, I, 18.

[4] See Livy, XLIV, 22.

[5] See *Ibid.*

[6] I do not shun praise, for my heart is not callous; but I deny that the end and goal of right-doing is, "Well done! Admirable!" — Persius, I, 47.

ning occasions of risking oneself individually, that we shall have deceived the world a thousand times before we are engaged in a dangerous strait; and even when we find ourselves caught in it, we can, for the nonce, cloak our play with a bold countenance and confident speech, although our heart is quaking within us. (*c*) And those who might have use of the Platonic ring, making him who wore it on his finger invisible if he turned it toward the palm of his hand [1] — many of them often would conceal themselves when they should show themselves most openly, and would be sorry to be placed in so honourable a position wherein necessity would make them bold.

(*a*) Falsus honor juvat, et mendax infamia terret
Quem, nisi mendosum et mendacem? [2]

See how marvellously uncertain and doubtful all these judgements are that are formed from external appearances; and no witness is so trustworthy as each man is to himself. Herein, how many camp-followers [3] have we as companions in our glory? He who steadily stands in an open trench — what does he do that fifty humble pioneers have not done before him, who open the way for him and protect him with their bodies, for five sous a day?

(*b*) Non, quicquid turbida Roma
Elevet, accedas, examenque improbum in illa
Castiges trutina; nec te quæsiveris extra.[4]

(*a*) We call it aggrandising our name to spread it abroad and scatter it in many mouths; our desire is that it may be everywhere received in good part, and that thus its growth may be to its advantage; that is what there is most pardonable in this design. But the excess of this disease goes so far

[1] The ring of Gyges. See Plato, *Republic*, book II; Cicero, *De Off.*, III, 9.

[2] Who, except a man who is vicious and deceitful, is delighted by undeserved honour, or dreads false calumny? — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 16. 39.

[3] *Goujats*. This and the next sentence were added in 1582.

[4] When tumultuous Rome disparages something, do not give your assent, and maintain the false tongue of that scale; nor seek your own mind outside yourself. — Persius, I, 5.

that many seek to get themselves talked about, in whatever way it may be. Trogus Pompeius says of Herostratus, and Livy of Manlius Capitolinus, that they were more desirous of great than of good renown.[1] This is a common vice. We care more to be talked of than how we are talked of; and it is enough for us that our name should be often on men's lips, however it may be there welcomed. It seems that to be known is, in some sort, to have one's life and its duration in others' keeping. For my part, I hold that I exist only in myself; and as to this other life of mine, which lies in the cognisance of my friends, (*c*) regarding it nakedly and simply in itself, (*a*) I know well that I feel neither profit nor enjoyment from it, save through the foolishness of a fanciful conception. And when I am dead, I shall be even much less sensible of it; (*c*) and also, I shall completely lose the use of the real advantages that sometimes accidentally follow it;[2] (*a*) I shall have then no means by which to grasp reputation or by which it can touch or reach me. For, to expect my name to acquire it, in the first place, I have no name which is sufficiently mine; of two that I have, one is common to my whole lineage, yes, also to others. There is a family at Paris and at Montpellier surnamed Montaigne; another, in Bretagne and in Saintonge, La Montaigne. The removal of a single syllable will confuse our threads[3] so that I shall have a share in their glory, and they, perchance, in my shame. And also, my forbears were formerly surnamed Eyquem, which surname still belongs to a well-known house in England. As for my other name, it goes to any one who likes to take it. So, perhaps, I shall honour a porter in my stead. And then, even if I should have a personal indication for myself, what can it indicate when I am no longer there? Can it designate and grace nothingness?

(*b*) Nunc levior cyppus non imprimit ossa?
Laudat posteritas; nunc non e manibus illis,

[1] Herostratus: this is not in Trogus Pompeius, but in Valerius Maximus, VIII, 5, *ext.* 14. Manlius Capitolinus: see Livy, VI, 2. Montaigne took the sentence from the preface to Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem.*

[2] It = "the cognisance of my friends."

[3] *Meslera nos fusées.*

Nunc non e tumulo fortunataque favilla
Nascuntur violæ? [1]

(*a*) But I have spoken of this elsewhere.[2]

For the rest, in a whole battle in which ten thousand men are maimed or killed, there are not fifteen who are talked of. There must needs be some very eminent greatness, or some consequence of importance which fortune connects with it, to give estimation to an individual exploit, not only of a musketeer, but of a captain. For, to kill one man, or two, or ten, to offer oneself bravely to death, is in truth something to each of us, for we risk every thing; but to the world they are things so common, so many of them are seen every day, and so many of the like are needed to produce a noteworthy effect, that we can not expect any special commendation for them;

(*b*) casus multis hic cognitus ac jam
Tritus, et e medio fortunæ ductus acervo.[3]

(*a*) Of so many thousands of valiant men who have died in France during the last fifteen hundred years, arms in hand, there are not a hundred who have come to our knowledge. The memory, not of the leaders only, but of the battles and victories, is buried. (*c*) The fortunes of more than half the world, for lack of record, make no stir and vanish without duration. If I had knowledge of unknown events, I should expect very easily to outdo with them those that are known, of all kinds of examples. (*a*) Why, of the Romans themselves, and the Greeks, with so many writers and witnesses and so many rare and noble exploits, how few have come down to us!

(*b*) Ad nos vix tenuis famæ perlabitur aura.[4]

[1] But not more lightly will the tombstone press on my bones. Let posterity praise me: still, not from those remains, still, not from the grave and from the favoured ashes, will violets spring. — Persius, I, 37. The original text has *laudant convivæ* at the beginning of the second line.

[2] In Book I, chap. 46 (Vol. I, p. 365).

[3] This chance is known to many, and is now frequent, and drawn from the middle of fortune's heap. — Juvenal, XIII, 9.

[4] Scarcely has a slight breath of their fame reached us. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VII, 646.

(*a*) It will be much if, a hundred years hence, men remember in a general way that in our day there were civil wars in France.

(*b*) The Lacedæmonians sacrificed to the Muses when going into battle, to the end that their deeds might be well and worthily chronicled, deeming it a divine favour, and not common, that noble actions should find witnesses who could give them life and memory.[1] (*a*) Do we think that, at every musket-shot that hits us and at every risk we run, there shall be immediately a clerk to record it? and that a hundred clerks besides shall write of it, whose commentaries shall last but three days, and shall come to the sight of no man? We have not the thousandth part of the writings of the ancients; it is chance which gives them shorter or longer life, according to its favour; (*c*) and what we have of them, it is permissible for us to doubt if it be not the worst, not having seen the rest. (*a*) Histories are not made of matters of so little moment; a man must needs have been the leader in conquering an empire or a kingdom; he must have won fifty-two pitched battles, always the weaker in numbers, like Cæsar. Ten thousand brave fellows and many great captains died in his company, gallantly and bravely, whose names lasted only as long as their wives and children lived;

(*b*) quos fama obscura recondit.[2]

(*a*) Even of those whom we see do well, three months or three years after they are left on the field they are no more spoken of than if they had never been.

Whoever shall consider, with just measure and proportion, of what men and deeds the glory is preserved by mention in books, will find that in our time there are very few actions and very few persons who can claim any right thereto. How many virtuous men we have seen survive their own reputation, who have witnessed and permitted the extinction, in their presence, of the honour and glory very justly acquired in their youthful days. And for three years of this unreal and imaginary life, shall we lose our true and essential life and pledge ourselves to an ever-imminent

[1] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians*.
[2] Who are shrouded in obscure fame. — Virgil, *Æneid*, V, 302.

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death? Wise men of old set before themselves a nobler and more fitting end of so weighty an undertaking. (*c*) *Recte facti, fecisse merces est.*[1] *Officii fructus ipsum officium est.*[2] (*a*) It would be excusable, perhaps, in a painter or other artisan, or even in a rhetorician or grammarian, to labour to acquire fame by his works; but the actions of virtue, those are too noble in themselves to seek other reward than from their own worth, and especially to seek it in the vanity of human judgements. If, however, this false belief is of service to the public in holding men to their duty; (*b*) if the people are awakened by it to virtue; if princes are moved by seeing the world bless the memory of Trajan and detest that of Nero; if it stirs them up to see the name of that villain,[3] once so terrifying and so dreaded, cursed and reviled so freely by every schoolboy who deals with him, (*a*) may it vigorously increase, and may it be fostered among us as much as possible.

(*c*) And Plato, employing every means to make his citizens virtuous, advises them, among other things, not to despise a good reputation and estimation in the world; and says that by some divine inspiration it falls out that even the wicked often, as well by word as by thought, can rightly distinguish the good and the bad.[4] This great man and his master [5] are wonderfully skilful and bold workmen in combining divine operations and revelations wherever human power is lacking; *ut tragici poetæ confugiunt ad deum, cum explicare argumenti exitum non possunt.*[6] For this reason, perhaps, Timon, insulting him, called him "the great miracle-worker." [7]

(*a*) Since men, from their incompetence, can not be satisfied with lawful coin, let them use the false also. This method has been employed by all legislators, and there is no

[1] The reward of a good deed is the having done it. — Seneca, *Epistle* 81.19.

[2] The fruit of being of service is the service itself. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 22.

[3] *Ce grand pendart.*

[4] See Plato, *Laws*, book XII.

[5] Plato and Socrates.

[6] As tragic poets have recourse to a god when they can not achieve the conclusion of their drama. — Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 20.

[7] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato.*

form of government wherein there is not some admixture, either of elaborate pretence or of untrue opinion,[1] which serves as a curb to hold the common people to their duty. It is for this that the greater number have fabulous origins and beginnings, enriched with supernatural mysteries. It is this which has given credit to bastard religions, and has caused them to find favour with men of intelligence; and it was for this that Numa and Sertorius, to make those of their day firmer of faith, fed them with these absurdities: the first, that his nymph Egeria, the other that his white hind, brought to him from the gods all the counsels that he received.[2] (*c*) And the authority that Numa ascribed to his laws, under the pretext of the patronage of that goddess, Zoroaster, the legislator of the Bactrians and of the Persians, ascribed to his under the name of the god Oromasis; Trismegistus, of the Egyptians, under that of Mercury; Zamolxis, of the Scythians, under that of Vesta; Charondas, of the Chalcideans, under that of Saturn; Minos, of the Candians, under that of Jupiter; Lycurgus, of the Lacedæmonians, under that of Apollo; Draco and Solon, of the Athenians, under that of Minerva. And every government has a god at its head; falsely all others, truly that which Moses framed for the people of Judea coming forth from Egypt.

(*a*) The religion of the Bedouins, so the sieur de Joinville says,[3] held, among other things, that the soul of those of them who died for their prince passed into another body, happier, fairer, and stronger than the first; wherefore they risk their lives much more freely.

(*b*) In ferrum mens prona viris, animæque capaces
Mortis, et ignavum est redituræ parcere vitæ.[4]

(*a*) This is a very comfortable belief, however vain it may be. Every nation has several such examples of its own; but this subject would deserve a separate discourse.

[1] *Opinion* = public opinion.

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Numa* and *Life of Sertorius*.

[3] *Histoire de Saint-Louis*, LVI.

[4] The minds of men rush on the steel, and their souls are prepared for death; and it is faint-hearted to save a life that is to be renewed. — Lucan, I, 461.

Pour dire encore un mot sur mon premier propos, je ne conseille non plus aux Dames d'appeller honneur leur devoir: (*c*) *ut enim consuetudo loquitur, id solum dicitur honestum quod est populari fama gloriosum;*[1] leur devoir est le marc, leur honneur n'est que l'escorce. (*a*) Ny ne leur conseille de nous donner cette excuse en payement de leur refus; car je presuppose que leurs intentions, leur desir et leur volonté, qui sont pieces où l'honneur n'a que voir, d'autant qu'il n'en paroit rien au dehors, soyent encore plus reglées que les effects;

Quæ, quia non liceat, non facit, illa facit.[2]

L'offence et envers Dieu et en la conscience seroit aussi grande de le desirer que de l'effectuer. Et puis ce sont actions d'elles mesmes cachées et occultes; il seroit bien aysé qu'elles en desrobassent quelcune à la connoissance d'autruy, d'où l'honneur depend, si elles n'avoyent autre respect à leur devoir, et à l'affection qu'elles portent à la chasteté pour elle mesme. (*c*) Every honourable person prefers to lose his honour rather than to be false to his conscience.

CHAPTER XVII

OF PRESUMPTION

An abridgement of this Essay might be entitled, "Montaigne judged by himself"; and its chief interest lies in the simplicity with which in the course of its easy pages he depicts himself. The portrait is of such intimacy that no man could so portray another; but it is as free from *arrangement*, as little *composed*, as if taken unawares. In the modern phrase, *il se regardait vivre;* but this doubling of himself into the observed and the observer he accomplished with no trace of modern morbid self-introspection, and no modern morbid exaggeration of qualities and defects into virtues and vices. All is characteristically moderate in tone.

The Essay opens with a reference to the preceding one, and it was perhaps its opening sentence that suggested its title; but it soon passes

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[1] Just as, in common speech, that alone is said to be honourable which is glorious in the opinion of the vulgar. — Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 15.

[2] She really yields who denies herself simply because it is unlawful to yield. — Ovid, *Amores*, III, 4.4.

into a justification of talking about oneself, and then into autobiography — the presentation of the Essayist's own mind.

The subsequent pages need no analysis, but it is only after many readings and re-readings of them in many different lights that one fully recognises the value to one's own mind of familiarity with this natural, *sane* intelligence, an intelligence whose native veracity, strengthened by conscious will, rendered it capable of *weighing itself* and calmly proclaiming what it found indicated.

Montaigne divides the vice of "presumption" into two: the esteeming oneself too highly, and the esteeming another not highly enough. It is the presence or absence of the first defect that he studies in himself for many pages; but he then enters on the other part, and this leads to some very interesting remarks on the men he had known (notably La Boëtie) and the mistakes made in education in that day; from which he passes to an enumeration of the most remarkable men of the time, — soldiers, statesmen, poets, — and then to the praises of Marie de Gournay, which last passage was not printed till 1595.[1]

Most of the Essay was written in 1573 and 1574, but it was much "variated" in the edition of 1595.

THERE is another sort of glory, which is a too high opinion that we conceive of our worth. It is an ill-advised affection with which we flatter ourselves, which represents us to ourselves other than we are; as amorous passion lends beauties and charms to that which it embraces, and causes those who are possessed by it, their judgement being disturbed and diverted, to deem what they love different from what it is, and more perfect. I would not that a man, for fear of erring in that direction, should depreciate himself, or think that he is less than he is. The judgement ought in all things to maintain its prerogative: it is reasonable that he should see in this matter, as in every other, what the truth presents to him. If he be Cæsar, let him boldly deem himself the greatest captain in the world. We are made up of conventions; convention matters much to us, and we neglect the substance of things; we hold by the branches and forego the trunk and the body. We have taught ladies to blush at the mere mention of what they in no wise fear to do; we dare not call our members by their right name, and do not fear to employ

[1] It is noteworthy as evincing an interesting trait in her character that in the edition of the Essays which she published in 1635 and dedicated to Cardinal Richelieu, this passage is suppressed.

them in every sort of dissoluteness. Convention forbids us to express in words lawful and natural things, and we obey; reason forbids us to consider any such things unlawful and evil, and no one obeys. I find myself hindered here by the laws of convention; for it permits one to speak neither well nor ill of oneself. We will set it aside for the moment.

Those whom Fortune (good or ill, as one may call it) has made to pass their lives in some eminent station can by their public actions show what they are. But they whom she has employed only in the mass, (*c*) and of whom no one will talk if they do not talk of themselves, (*a*) they are to be excused if they have the boldness to talk of themselves to those whom it concerns to know them, after the example of Lucilius: —

> Ille velut fidis arcana sodalibus olim
> Credebat libris, neque, si male cesserat, usquam
> Decurrens alio, neque si bene; quo fit ut omnis
> Votiva pateat veluti descripta tabella
> Vita senis.[1]

He entrusted to his paper his actions and his thoughts, and depicted himself there as he felt himself to be. (*c*) *Nec id Rutilio et Scauro citra fidem aut obtrectationi fuit.*[2]

(*a*) Let me say, then, that I remember that there was observed in me, in my earliest childhood, I know not what carriage of body and demeanour testifying to an empty and foolish pride. I would say about this, in the first place, that it is not unusual[3] to have conditions and propensities so individual and so embodied in us, that we have no means of perceiving them and of recognising them. And from such innate tendencies the body readily retains some habit without our knowledge and volition. It was an affectation in harmony with his beauty which made Alexander incline his head slightly,[4] and which made the speech of Alcibiades a

[1] He used to confide his secrets to his books as to faithful comrades, and never had other recourse, whether he had been successful or unsuccessful; so it is that the life of the old man is wholly seen in his writings, as it might be in a votive tablet. — Horace, *Satires*, II, 1.30.

[2] Nor for so doing were Rutilius and Scaurus disbelieved or blamed. — Tacitus, *Agricola*, I.

[3] *Pas inconvenient.*

[4] See Plutarch, *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend.*

little effeminate and lisping;[1] being endowed with extreme beauty, they assisted themselves a little, unintentionally, by foppery.[2] Julius Cæsar was wont to scratch his head with one finger,[3] which is the action of a man full of serious thoughts; and Cicero, methinks, was accustomed to wrinkle his nose, which indicates a natural scoffer. Such notions may come to us imperceptibly. Others there are, intentional, of which I am not speaking, like salutations and bowings, whereby is acquired, oftenest mistakenly, the reputation of being very humble and courteous; (*c*) a man may be humble vain-gloriously. (*b*) I am lavish enough in doffing my hat, especially in summer, and am never so saluted without returning it, whatever the man's rank may be, if he is not in my service. I could wish that some princes whom I know were more sparing and judicious dispensers of this courtesy; for being so indiscreetly lavished, it no longer hits the mark; if it is without consideration, it is without effect. (*a*) Amongst examples of unmannerly demeanour,[4] let us not forget the arrogance of the Emperor Constantius, who, in public, always looked straight before him, without turning his head or bending to one side or the other, not even to look at those close by who saluted him, keeping his body stiff, motionless, not swaying with the motion of his coach, not daring to spit or blow his nose or wipe his face before the lookers-on.[5]

I do not know if the gestures that were observed in me were of this first sort,[6] and if, in truth, I had some hidden propensity to that vice, as may well be the case; and I can not answer for the movements of the body; but as for the movements of the soul, I desire to confess here what I feel with regard to them.

There are two parts in this sort of vain-glory:[7] namely, the ranking ourselves too high, and the ranking others not

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Alcibiades*.
[2] The last clause was omitted in 1595.
[3] See Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar*.
[4] *Entre les contenances desreglées*.
[5] See Ammianus Marcellinus, XXI, 16. It was Constantius II.
[6] That is, unconscious.
[7] *Gloire:* the word here has a different meaning from that in which it is used as the subject of the last Essay.

high enough. As for the first, (*c*) it seems to me, in the first place, that these considerations should be taken into account: I find myself weighed upon by a mental error that offends me both as unreasonable and, yet more, as troublesome. I try to correct it, but uproot it I can not. It is that I diminish the true value of the things that I possess, because I possess them;[1] and that I increase the value of things in proportion as they are foreign to me — absent, and not mine. This disposition stretches far. As their prerogative of authority causes husbands to regard their own wives with unjustifiable disdain, and many fathers their children, so is it with me; and between two similar works I should always incline against my own. It is not so much that desire for my progress and improvement disturbs my judgement and prevents me from satisfying myself, as that mastership in itself engenders contempt of that which one holds and controls. The governments, the manners, and the languages of distant lands win my admiration; and I perceive that Latin cheats me, by favour of its dignity, of more than is its due, as it does with children and the common people. The domestic management, the house, the horse, of my neighbour, of equal value with mine, are better because they are not mine. Moreover, because I am very ignorant about what concerns me, I admire the confidence and reliance that another man has in himself, when there is almost nothing which I am sure I know, or which I dare answer to myself that I can do. I have not my faculties arranged beforehand and at my service,[2] and I am not aided by them until after the thing is done, being as doubtful of myself as of every thing else. Whence it happens, if I acquit myself laudably in some business, that I ascribe it more to my luck than to my ability; inasmuch as I plan them all at hazard and in doubt. For my part, (*a*) in general, of all the opinions that antiquity has held of mankind in gross, those that I accept most readily, and most adhere to, are those that most contemn and disesteem us, and make naught of us. Philosophy never seems to me to have such good play as when it combats our presumption and emptiness, when it

[1] The last clause was omitted in 1595.

[2] *Je n'ay point mes moyens en proposition et par estat.*

honestly recognises its own hesitation, its weakness, and its ignorance. It seems to me that the nurse-mother of the falsest opinions, both public and private, is the too good opinion that man has of himself. Those people who perch themselves astride the epicycle of Mercury, (*c*) who see so far into heaven, (*a*) make me grind my teeth; for in my studies, the subject of which is man, finding so extreme a variety of judgements, so vast a labyrinth of difficulties, one after another, so much diversity and uncertainty in the very school of knowledge of things divine and human,[1] you can think, since those minds have been unable to arrive at the knowledge of themselves and their own condition, which is constantly present to their eyes; since they know not how that moves which themselves set in motion, or how to describe to us and explain the springs which themselves hold and manage — you can think whether I would believe them about the cause of the movement of the eighth sphere and of the rise and fall of the river Nile. The curiosity to know things has been given to men for a scourge, says Holy Writ.[2]

But, to come to my individual case, it would be very hard, it seems to me, for any other man to value himself less, indeed, for any other to value me less, than I value myself. (*c*) I consider myself to be of the common sort, save in that I do so consider myself; blameworthy of the meanest and most usual failings, but not unacknowledged, not excused; and I rate myself only at what I know to be my worth. If there be vain-glory, it is infused in me superficially by the treachery of my nature, and has no body which is apparent to the sight of my judgement. I am sprinkled with it, but not dyed.[3] (*a*) For, in truth, as to the conscious actions of my intelligence, nothing has ever gone from me, in whatever fashion, that filled out my wishes; and the approbation

[1] *En l'eschole mesme de la sapience.*

[2] This is a translation of a sentence inscribed on the beams of Montaigne's library: *Cognoscendi studium homini dedit Deus epis torquendi gratia. Eccl. I.* "This thought," says Miss Norton (*Studies in Montaigne*, p. 167), "is to be found in *Ecclesiastes* I, 13: *Et proposui in animo mea quærere et investigare sapienter de omnibus quæ fiunt sub sole. Hanc occupationem pessimam dedit Deus filiis hominum ut occuparentur in ea.*"

[3] See Seneca, *Epistle* 71.31, and *Epistle* 110.

of others does not content me. My taste is sensitive and hard to please, and especially in my own case; I incessantly disavow myself, and I perceive that I waver and yield from weakness. I know myself so well that, if there had gone from me any thing which pleased me, I should owe it, doubtless, to fortune.[1] I have nothing of my own with which to satisfy my judgement. My perception is, for the most part, clear and disciplined; but when I am working, it becomes confused; as I experience most evidently in poetry. I love it exceedingly; my insight is excellent about the works of others; but, in truth, I am like a child when I set my hand to it; I can not endure myself. One can play the fool everywhere else, but not in poetry;

mediocribus esse poetis
Non dii, non homines, non concessere columnæ.[2]

Would to God that this sentence were found on the front of the shops of all our printers, to forbid the entry of so many versifiers: —

verum
Nil securius est malo Poeta.[3]

(*c*) What numbers have we of the tribe![4] Dionysius the elder valued nothing in himself so much as his poetry. At the season of the Olympic games, with chariots surpassing all others in magnificence, he sent also poets and musicians to present his verses, with tents and pavilions regally gilded and hung with tapestry.[5] When his verses were brought forward, the charm and excellence of the delivery attracted at the outset the attention of the people; but when, later, they came to weigh the emptiness of the work, they first became contemptuous, and, their judgement being constantly embittered, they at last became furious, and ran in anger to

[1] This sentence was omitted in 1595.

[2] Mediocrity in poets is not permitted by the gods, nor by men, nor by the pillars [on which they hang their verses]. — Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 372.

[3] But there is nothing more confident than a bad poet. — Martial, XII, 63.13.

[4] *Que n'avons nous de tels peuples!*

[5] See Diodorus Siculus, XIV, 28.

pull down and tear to pieces all his pavilions. And when also his chariots had no success in the races, and the ship which carried home his attendants failed to reach Sicily, and was driven before the gale and wrecked on the coast of Tarentum, they held it for certain that it was the wrath of the gods, irritated, as themselves were, against that bad poem. And even the sailors who escaped from the wreck seconded the opinion of the people. To which the oracle that predicted his death seems in some degree to subscribe. It declared that Dionysius would be near his end when he had vanquished those who were worth more than he; which he interpreted to mean the Carthaginians, who surpassed him in power.[1] And having to do with them, he frequently avoided victory and lessened it, in order not to come within the terms of that prediction. But he ill understood it: for the god indicated the time of the advantage which, by favour and injustice, he gained at Athens over the tragic poets who were better than he, having caused his own tragedy, entitled "The Leneians,"[2] to be acted in competition; immediately after which time he died, partly from the excessive joy that he took in it.[3]

(*a*) What I find excusable in my poetry is not in itself and in reality, but in comparison with other worse productions to which I see that approval is given. I envy the good-fortune of those who are able to find delight and gratification in their labour, for it is an easy way of giving oneself pleasure, since it is drawn from oneself; (*c*) especially if there is a little firmness in their persuasion. I know a poet to whom loudly and feebly, in public and in private,[4] both heaven and earth cry out that he has little understanding of the matter. For all that, he does not at all reduce the measure which he has given to himself — always beginning anew, al-

[1] See Diodorus Siculus, XV, 20.

[2] This was the name of the festival (of Bacchus), not of the tragedy; but the error was made by Amyot, in his translation, and repeated by Montaigne.

[3] See Diodorus Siculus, *ubi supra*. When Montaigne wrote in the second chapter of Book I (Vol. I, p. 14) that Dionysius the Tyrant "died of joy," his authority was the elder Pliny. It was after reading Diodorus, says M. Villey, that he toned down his statement.

[4] *En foule et en chambre.*

ways reconsidering, and always persisting; all the more unyielding in his opinion and more stiff-necked, that he is alone in maintaining it. (*a*) My works are so far from being agreeable to me, that, whenever I look them over, I am offended by them;

(*b*) Cum relego, scripsisse pudet, quia plurima cerno,
Me quoque qui feci judice, digna lini.[1]

(*a*) I have always an idea in my mind and a certain confused image, which puts before me, as in a dream, a better form than that which I have made use of; but I can not grasp it and develop it. (*c*) And this idea itself is only of mediocre quality. (*a*) From this I conclude that the productions of those great and richly endowed minds of the past are very far beyond the extreme bound of my imagination and desire. Their writings do not merely satisfy me and fill me, but they astound me and ravish me with admiration. I appreciate their beauty; I see it, if not to its full extent, at least so far that it is impossible for me to aspire to it.

Whatever I undertake, I ought to pay a sacrifice to the Graces, as Plutarch says, to gain their favour; [2]

si quid enim placet,
Si quid dulce hominum sensibus influit,
Debentur lepidis omnia gratiis.[3]

They abandon me throughout. It is all clumsiness with me; there is a lack of gracefulness and beauty. I know not how to make things show for all they are worth; my fashioning adds nothing to the subject. That is why my subject must be a forcible one, one which has much to take hold of, and which shines by its own light. (*c*) When I lay hands on popular and lighter themes, it is to follow my bent, — for I myself do not enjoy a formal and sombre wisdom, as the world does, — and to enliven myself, not to enliven my style, which seeks rather those that are serious and grave

[1] When I re-read them, I am ashamed of having written them, for I see many things that I, even their author, judge should be erased. — Ovid, *Ex Ponto*, I, 5.15.

[2] See Plutarch, *Marriage Precepts*, XXVI.

[3] For, if any thing pleases, if any thing sweetly influences men's senses, all is due to the charming Graces. — Source unknown.

(if, at least, I may call that a style which is a formless and irregular utterance, a common way of speaking, running on without definition, without division of parts, without any conclusion, vague, after the manner of that of Amafanius and of Rabirius).[1] (*a*) I know neither how to please, nor how to entertain, nor how to amuse; the best story in the world becomes dry and dull in my hands. I know not how to talk except in sober earnest, and I am altogether without that facility, which I observe in many of my companions, for conversing with the first-comer and keeping a whole company listening; or for unweariedly amusing the ear of a prince with all sorts of sayings, never lacking matter, by reason of their gift of knowing how to make use of the first subject that comes to hand, and to adapt it to the humour and capacity of those with whom they have to do. (*b*) Princes do not much enjoy solid talk, nor I, story-telling. (*a*) What I have to say, I say always with all my strength.[2] The first and simplest arguments, which are commonly the best received, I know not how to make use of; (*c*) I am a poor preacher of commonplaces. On all matters I say freely the most important things that I know about them. Cicero thinks that in philosophical treatises the most difficult part is the exordium.[3] If it be so, I am wise in undertaking the conclusion.[4]

(*a*) But we must tune the string to every degree of tone, and the highest is that which comes least often into play. There is at least as much accomplished in lifting high an empty thing as in holding up a heavy one. Sometimes we must handle things superficially, sometimes we must go deep into them. I know well that the greater number of men remain at a low level, from not conceiving things except on the surface; but I know also that the greatest masters and Xenophon (*c*) and Plato (*a*) are often seen, when occasion offers, to let themselves go to this low and common manner of speaking and treating of things, and elevating it by the graces that never fail them.

[1] See Cicero, *Academica*, I, 2.
[2] This sentence of 1580 to 1588 was omitted in 1595.
[3] See his translation of the *Timæus* of Plato, II.
[4] *Je me prens à la conclusion.*

For the rest, my language has nothing of facility and polish; it is harsh and careless,[1] of free and irregular arrangement; and it pleases me so — (*c*) if not my judgement, my liking. (*a*) But I well know that sometimes I let myself go too far in this, and by dint of trying to avoid art and affectation I fall into them on another side;

brevis esse laboro,
Obscurus fio.[2]

(*c*) Plato says that diffuseness and brevity are not properties which either take away or give value to language.[3]

(*a*) If I should undertake to follow that other even, smooth, and regular style, I could not attain it; and although the breaks and cadences of Sallust are more in accord with my nature, yet I find Cæsar greater, and also less easy to copy; and if my bent leads me more to imitation of the style of Seneca, I do not fail to rate more highly that of Plutarch. As in deeds,[4] so in words, I follow quite simply my natural way; whence it is, perhaps, that I am more effective in talking than in writing. But it may be, also, that gesture and action give life to words, especially in those persons who bestir themselves briskly [5] as I do, and grow hot. The bearing, the face, the voice, the dress, the place, may give some value to things which in themselves have little, like idle chatter. Messala, in Tacitus, complains of certain tight habiliments of his day, and of the arrangement of the benches where the orators spoke, which enfeebled their eloquence.[6]

My French tongue is injured, both in pronunciation and otherwise, by the barbarous speech of my native place; I have never seen a man of those regions [7] whose speech did

[1] *Facile et poli; il est aspre et desdeigneus.* In 1580: *doux et fluide, il est sec et espineux.* In 1588: *facile et fluide; il est aspre.*

[2] I strive to be brief, and become obscure. — Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 25.

[3] See *Politicus, Laws* (book X), and the last part of the *Phædo.*

[4] *Comme à faire.* In the edition of 1595, *faire* was misprinted *taire*, and the error was repeated in many later editions, and by Florio in his translation: "As well in *silence* as in speech," etc.

[5] *Brusquement.* In 1580: *toujours avec vehemence.*

[6] See Tacitus, *Dialogus de Oratoribus*, 39.

[7] *Des contrées en deça;* that is, *en deça la Charente*, the limit of the *langue d'Oc.*

not smack of his native soil,[1] and offend ears purely French. Yet this does not mean that I am much versed in my Perigordin, for I make no more use of it than of German; and I take no thought of it. (*c*) It is an effeminate, languid, feeble language, like those around me, of one province and another — of Poitou, Saintonge, Angoumois, Limousin, and Auvergne. (*a*) There is, indeed, above us, toward the mountains, a Gascon speech that I find singularly fine, concise, significant, and in truth a more manly and soldier-like tongue than any other that I hear; (*c*) as vigorous, forcible, and pithy as the French is graceful, refined, and copious. (*a*) As for the Latin, which was given me as my mother-tongue, I have lost by disuse readiness in being able to use it in speaking, (*c*) yes, and in writing, in which I was formerly called a master. (*a*) It may be seen how little I am worth in that direction.

Beauty is a thing of great estimation in the intercourse of men; it is the first means of winning good-will among them, and no man is so uncivilised and surly that he may not feel in some degree impressed by its charm. The body has a large part in our existence; it holds a high place there; thus its structure and composition are most worthy of consideration. They who would disunite our two principal parts, and isolate them from one another, are mistaken. On the contrary, we must recouple them and rejoin them. We must bid the soul not to draw aside and maintain herself apart, not to despise and desert the body (indeed, she could not so do save by some false pretence [2]), but to connect herself with it, embrace it, cherish it, help it, guide it, counsel it, correct it, and bring it back when it goes astray — in short, marry it, and assist it as if it were her husband; so that their doings may not seem diverse and opposed, but in accord and uniform. Christians have a special indication of this bond; for they know that the divine justice includes this companionship and union of the body and the soul, to the point of making the body capable of eternal rewards; and that God considers the entire man as acting, and wills that, as a whole, he receive chastisement or praise, according to his deserts.

[1] *Qui ne sentit evidemment son ramage.*
[2] *Quelque singerie contrefaicte.*

(*c*) The Peripatetic school, of all schools the best adapted to human life, considers as an attribute of wisdom [1] this sole care to provide for and procure the common welfare of these two associated parts; and shows that the other schools, by not having paid sufficient heed to the consideration of this conjunction, have taken sides, by a similar error, this one for the body, that one for the soul, and have wandered from their subject, which is man, and their guide, which they declare to be, in general, nature.

(*a*) It is very probable that superiority of beauty was the first cause of difference among men, and the first consideration that gave the preëminence to some over others.

> (*b*) Agros divisere atque dedere
> Pro facie cujusque et viribus ingenioque;
> Nam facies multum valuit viresque vigebant.[2]

(*a*) Now I am of a stature a little below the medium. This defect is not only uncomely, but disadvantageous, especially for those who hold high commands and offices; for the authority which is given by a fine presence and bodily majesty is lacking to them. (*c*) Caius Marius did not willingly accept soldiers who were less than six feet in height.[3] The Courtier [4] is quite right to desire for the gentlemen whom he is educating a usual stature rather than any other, and to object to any peculiarity that attracts attention.[5] But as for choosing, if it is necessary that the height should be rather below than above mediocrity, I would not so do [6] for a soldier. Small men, Aristotle says, are very pretty, but not beautiful; and as in a lofty bearing the great soul is recognised, so is beauty in a large and tall body.[7] (*a*) The Ethiopians and Indians, he says, in choosing their kings and magistrates, had regard to the beauty and height of their

[1] *De toutes les sectes la plus civilisee, attribue à la sagesse.*

[2] They divided the fields and gave to each man in proportion to his personal beauty and strength and intellect; for beauty and vigorous strength were much esteemed. — Lucretius, V, 1110.

[3] Vegetius, I, 5. But Montaigne's source was the *Politiques* of Justus Lipsius, V, 12.

[4] Referring to *Il Cortegiano*, by Baldasarre Castiglione, I, 20.

[5] *Qui le face montrer au doigt.*

[6] That is, as Castiglione does.

[7] See Aristotle, *Nicomachæan Ethics*, IV, 7.

person.[1] They were right; for to see a leader of fine and ample stature marching at the head of his troops excites respect in those who follow him, and dread in the enemy.

(*b*) Ipse inter primos præstanti corpore Turnus
Vertitur, arma tenens, et toto vertice supra est.[2]

Our great king, divine and celestial, all of whose conditions should be observed with care, piety, and reverence, did not reject the bodily commendation, *speciosus forma præ filiis hominum*.[3] (*c*) And Plato, together with gravity and stoutness of heart, desires beauty for the rulers of his republic.[4]

(*a*) It is a great annoyance if one speaks to you, amidst your servants, and asks, "Where is your master?" and if you receive only the fag-end of a salutation which is given to your barber or your secretary. As happened to poor Phocion (I can easily make mistakes in the names, but not in the substance).[5] He having arrived before his followers at a lodging where he was expected, his hostess, who did not know him and saw him to be of poor enough appearance, made use of him to help her women draw water, or make a fire, in preparation for Philopœmen. The gentlemen of his suite, having arrived and surprised him busied with this fine occupation (for he had not failed to obey the orders given him), asked him what he was doing. "I am paying the penalty of my ugliness," he answered.[6] Other beauties are for women; beauty of stature is the sole beauty of men. When the figure is small, neither the height *and smoothness*[7]

[1] Aristotle, *Politics*, IV, 44. But Montaigne took this from the Commentary of Loys le Roy, who translated the *Politics* of Aristotle in 1568.

[2] Turnus himself, distinguished in appearance, a whole head taller than the rest, marches among the foremost, his arms in his hands. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VII, 783. In 1580, in place of these lines was the single line: *Colloque tenus supereminet omnes* (source unknown).

[3] Fairer than the sons of men. — *Psalm* XLV, 2.

[4] See the *Republic*, book VII.

[5] This is the text of 1580. In 1588 the name was changed to Philopœmen, and the parenthesis was dropped.

[6] See Plutarch, *Life of Philopœmen*.

[7] *Ny l'epesseur bien unie d'une barbe brune à escorce de chataigne, ny le poil relevé.*

of the brow, nor the clearness *and softness* of the eyes, nor a reasonably well-shaped nose, nor smallness of the ear and mouth, nor regularity and whiteness of the teeth, nor the even closeness of a brown beard, *nor thick hair*,[1] nor a well-shaped head, too large rather than too small, nor a fresh complexion, nor a pleasant expression of the face, *nor an odorless body*,[2] nor the good proportions of the limbs, can make a handsome man.

As for me, my person is strong and thick-set; my face not fat, yet full; my temperament (*b*) between jovial and melancholy, moderately (*a*) sanguine and hot,

Unde rigent setis mihi crura, et pectora villis;[3]

my health was strong and vigorous, seldom impaired by sickness, until late in life, although I made very free use of it.[4] Such I was; for I am not considering myself at the present time, when I have entered into the avenues of old age, being long since past forty;

(*b*) minutatim vires et robur adultum
Frangit, et in partem pejorem liquitur ætas.[5]

(*a*) What I shall be henceforth will be only a half existence; it will no longer be myself. Daily I slip away from myself and purloin myself from myself;

Singula de nobis anni prædantur euntes.[6]

Of readiness and activity I have had none; and yet I am the son of a very active father,[7] of an agility that lasted to his extreme old age. There was scarcely to be found a man of his position who equalled him in all bodily exercises; as I have found scarcely any who did not surpass me in them, save in running, at which I was among the moderately

[1] *Inclinant un peu sur la grossesse* (1580; omitted in 1588 and 1595).

[2] The phrases printed in italics were all added in 1588.

[3] And my legs and chest are hairy. — Martial, II, 36.5.

[4] The last clause (1580) was omitted in 1588 and 1595.

[5] Little by little age breaks our powers and our matured strength, and wastes away in decay. — Lucretius, II, 1131.

[6] The fleeting years steal from us one thing after another. — Horace, *Epistles*, II, 2.55.

[7] *Un père très dispost.* In 1580 to 1588: *le plus dispost qui se vid de son temps.* As to his father's activity, see Book II, chap. 2 (Vol. II, p. 56).

good. Of music they have never been able to teach me any thing, either for my voice, which is very unapt, or for instruments. In dancing, in tennis, in wrestling, I have never been able to acquire more than a very slight and ordinary skill; in swimming, in fencing, in vaulting and leaping, none at all. As for my hands, they are so stiff that I can not write, even to be read by myself; so that what I have scribbled, I like better to rewrite than to take the trouble to decipher it. (*c*) And I read little better; I feel that I weary my hearers. Otherwise, a fair scholar. (*a*) I can not fold a letter properly,[1] and I never knew how to make a pen, or to carve well at table, (*c*) or to put on a horse's trappings, or to carry a hawk properly and cast her off, or to train dogs, birds, or horses.

(*a*) My bodily faculties, in short, are very accordant with those of my soul. There is nothing agile about them; there is only a full and solid vigour. I endure labour very well; but I endure it if I go about it voluntarily, and so far as my appetite leads me to it, —

Molliter austerum studio fallente laborem.[2]

Otherwise, if I am not allured to it by some enjoyment, and if I have any other guide than my pure free will, I am worth nothing at it. For I have reached the point where, save health and life, there is nothing (*c*) for which I choose to fret myself, and (*a*) which I care to purchase at the price of torment of mind, and of constraint, —

(*b*) tanti mihi non sit opaci
Omnis arena Tagi, quodque in mare volvitur aurum,[3] —

(*c*) being extremely idle, extremely free from ties, both by nature and by intention. I would give my blood as readily as my pains.[4]

(*a*) I have a soul that belongs wholly to herself, accustomed to conduct herself in her own fashion. Having never

[1] Cf. Book I, chap. 40 (Vol. I, p. 335).

[2] Eagerness deceptively lightening the severe task. — Horace, *Satires*, II, 2.12.

[3] Not for me, at such a price, all the sand of the dark Tagus, and all the gold that is in the sea. — Juvenal, III, 54.

[4] About a friend's affairs, or public affairs?

to this hour had any commanding or enforced master, I have walked as far and at such a pace as pleased me. This has softened me and made me unfit for the service of others, and has made me of use only to myself; (*c*) and for me there has been no need to put force upon my heavy, indolent, and do-nothing nature. (*a*) For, finding myself from my birth in such a degree of fortune that I have had reason to stay there, (*c*) and with such a degree of intelligence as I have felt that I had occasion for, (*a*) I have sought nothing and have taken nothing.[1]

> Non agimur tumidis velis Aquilone secundo;
> Non tamen adversis ætatem ducimus austris;
> Viribus, ingenio, specie, virtute, loco, re,
> Extremi primorum, extremis usque priores.[2]

(*c*) I have had need, for content, only of a sufficiency; that is, however, when properly understood, a regulation of the mind equally difficult in every sort of condition, and which by experience we see to be found more easily even in want than in abundance, because, perchance, like the course of our other passions, the appetite for riches is more sharpened by their use than by their lack, and the virtue of moderation is more rare than that of long-suffering; and I have needed only to enjoy quietly the goods that God, through his liberality, has placed in my hands. I have had no experience of any sort of tedious toil. I have had scarcely any affairs to manage except my own; or, if I have had such, it has been on the condition of managing them at my own time, and in my own way, they being entrusted to me by people who had confidence in me, and who did not importune me and who knew me. For experienced riders obtain some service, even from a stumbling and broken-winded horse. My childhood even was led in a mild, free fashion,

[1] In 1595 is substituted for this last clause: *une occasion pourtant, que mille autres de ma cognoissance eussent prinse, pour planche plutost, à se passer à la queste, à l'agitation et inquietude.*

[2] My sails are not swollen by the favouring north wind, but my course is not subject to the hostile south wind; in strength, in intelligence, in appearance, in excellence, in position, in fortune, if I am among the last of those of the first rank, I am among the first of those of the last rank. — Horace, *Epistles*, II, 2.201.

and I was exempt from rigorous subjection. All this has endowed me with a sensitive temperament, incapable of caretaking; to such a degree that I like better to have my losses and the irregularities that concern me concealed from me; I set to the account of my expenses what it costs me to support and maintain my negligence.[1]

(*a*) Hæc nempe supersunt,
Quæ dominum fallant, quæ prosint furibus.[2]

I like not to know the tale of what I possess, that I may feel a loss less distinctly. (*b*) I beg those who live with me, when they lack affection and kind deeds, to cheat me, and pay me with pleasant manners. (*a*) For want of enough firmness to endure the annoyance of the adverse chances to which we are subject, and from not being able to keep myself bent on regulating and ordering my affairs, I foster in myself, as much as I can, this way of thinking, abandoning myself entirely to fortune, to look on the worst side of every thing, and to resolve to endure that worst quietly and patiently. It is for this alone that I labour, and this is the aim to which I direct all my considerations.

(*b*) About any danger, I do not so much meditate how I shall escape it, as how little it matters whether I escape it. If I should come to my end there,[3] what would it amount to? Being unable to regulate events, I regulate myself, and adapt myself to them if they do not adapt themselves to me. I have but little skill in the matter of avoiding Fortune, and escaping from her or overcoming her, and in prudently arranging and conducting affairs to suit me. I have even less endurance in maintaining the keen and painful vigilance that is necessary therefor. And the most painful position for me is to be in suspense about things that are urgent, and agitated between fear and hope. Deliberation, indeed, even in the most trivial things, importunes me; and I feel my mind more pestered in suffering the actions and diverse

[1] In this paragraph the text of 1580 to 1588 is rearranged, without substantial change.

[2] These are superfluities that are unknown to the master, and that are of profit to thieves. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 6.45. By slightly changing the text, Montaigne precisely reverses the sense.

[3] *Quand j'y demeurerois.*

shocks of doubt and consultation than, after the die is cast, in settling down and resolving upon some course, whatever it may be. Few passions have ever disturbed my sleep, but the least deliberation troubles me. As with roads I by preference avoid steep and slippery hillsides, and take the most muddy and miry beaten path, whence I can not go lower, and there seek safety, so also I like misfortunes unalloyed, which do not work on me and harass me the more from the uncertainty of their being repaired, and which, at the first push, plunge me straightway into suffering:

(*c*) dubia plus torquent mala.[1]

(*b*) When the thing happens, I bear myself like a man; while it is approaching, like a child. Dread of the fall depresses me more than the fall itself. It costs more than it is worth. The miser is worse off with his passion than the poor man, and the jealous husband than the cuckold; and often there is less harm in losing one's vineyard than in going to law for it. The lowest step is the most stable; it is the seat of unremovableness;[2] you have need there only of yourself. It has its own foundation, and leans wholly on itself. Cet exemple d'un gentil'homme que plusieurs ont cogneu, a il pas quelque air philosophique? Il se marya bien avant en l'aage, ayant passé en bon compaignon sa jeunesse: grand diseur, grand gaudisseur. Se souvenant combien la matiere de cornardise luy avoit donné dequoy parler, et se moquer des autres, pour se mettre à couvert, il espousa une femme qu'il print au lieu où chacun en trouve pour son argent, et dressa avec elle ses alliances. Bon jour, putain! — Bon jour, cocu! Et n'est chose dequoy plus souvent et ouvertement il entretint chez luy les survenans, que de ce sien dessein; par où il bridoit les occultes caquets des moqueurs et esmoussoit la pouinte de ce reproche.

(*a*) As to ambition, which is a near neighbour of presumption, or, rather, the daughter, it would have been necessary for my advancement that Fortune should have come and taken me by the hand. Since, to give myself trouble for an

[1] Uncertain evils torture us most. — Seneca, *Agamemnon*, III, 1.29. Taken from the *Politics* of Justus Lipsius, V, 18.

[2] *C'est la siege de la constance.*

uncertain hope, and to subject myself to all the difficulties that wait upon those who try to force themselves into favour at the beginning of their career — I could not have done it:

(*b*) spem pretio non emo.[1]

I cling to what I see and what I have hold of, and go not far from port;

Alter remus aquas, alter tibi radat arenas.[2]

And then one seldom attains these advantages except by previously risking what belongs to him; and I am of opinion that, if what one has is sufficient to maintain the condition in which one has been born and brought up, it is folly to let go what is in one's hand, on the uncertainty of increasing it. He to whom Fortune denies a place whereon to set his foot and to establish a tranquil and settled existence is to be forgiven if he ventures what he has, since, in any case, the necessity sends him questing.

(*c*) Capienda rebus in malis præceps via est.[3]

(*b*) And I more readily excuse a younger brother for casting his inheritance to the winds than him who has the honour of the family in his keeping, and who can not be in want but by his own fault. (*a*) I found it, with the counsel of my good friends of past days, a shorter and easier road, to rid myself of such desires, and to keep quiet, —

Cui sit conditio dulcis sine pulvere palmæ,[4] —

judging, too, very truly of my powers, that they were not capable of great things, and recalling that saying of the late Chancellor Olivier, that the French seem like monkeys, who clamber up a tree, from branch to branch, and stay not until they have reached their highest branch, and, when there, show their hinder parts.

[1] I do not buy hope with gold. — Terence, *Adelphi*, II, 2.11.

[2] One oar sweeps through the waves, the other over the sands. — Propertius, III, 3.23.

[3] In evil circumstances a dangerous course must be taken. — Seneca, *Agamemnon*, II, 1.47.

[4] Whose agreeable lot it is to receive the palm [of victory] without the dust [of the course].— Horace, *Epistles*, I, 1.51.

(*b*) Turpe est, quod nequeas, capiti committere pondus,
Et pressum inflexo mox dare terga genu.[1]

(*a*) Even the qualities which are not reprehensible in me, I should have found useless in these days. The pliableness of my character [2] would have been called cowardice and weakness; my loyalty and conscientiousness would have been deemed over-scrupulous and superstitious; my frankness and independence, troublesome, ill considered, and rash. Misfortune is of some use. It is well to be born in a very depraved age; for, in comparison with others, you are reckoned virtuous at small cost. He who, in our days, is merely a parricide and sacrilegious is a worthy and honourable man.

(*b*) Nunc, si depositum non inficiatur amicus,
Si reddat veterem cum tota ærugine follem,
Prodigiosa fides et Tuscis digna libellis,
Quæque coronata lustrari debeat agna.[3]

And never was there a time or place in which, to princes, there was offered more certain and greater reward for goodness and justice. The first who shall consider making his way into favour and influence by this path, I am very much mistaken if he does not honourably outstrip his fellows. Power, violence, can do something, but not always every thing. (*c*) Merchants, village judges, artisans — we see that they are on a par in valour and military ability with the gentry; they conduct themselves honourably, both in public and private combats; they fight, they defend cities in our present wars. A prince finds his fame obscured[4] in such a crowd. Let him shine with humanity, truth, loyalty, temperance, and, above all, with justice: traits rare, unknown, and banished. It is solely by the will of the people that he can succeed, and no other quality can so invite their good-

[1] It is shameful to put on one's head a burden it can not carry, when soon, with bent knees, the back gives way. — Propertius, III, 9.5.

[2] *La facilité de mes meurs.*

[3] Now, if your friend does not deny the deposit, and returns the old purse, with all the rusty money, it is a prodigious probity, worthy of record in the Tuscan annals, and of the sacrifice of a crowned lamb. — Juvenal, XIII, 60.

[4] *Estouffe sa recommendation.*

will as these, being the most useful to them. *Nihil est tam populare quam bonitas.*[1]

(*a*) By such a standard I should have seemed to be (*c*) a great and rare man; whereas I seem puny and ordinary by the standard of some bygone ages, when it was a common thing, even if other stronger qualities did not concur, to see (*a*) a man moderate in his vengeance, mild in resentment for injuries, religious in the observance of his word, neither two-faced, nor pliable, nor accommodating his faith to the will of others and to circumstances. I would rather let things go to destruction [2] than pervert my faithfulness in their service. For as to this new virtue of hypocrisy and dissimulation, which at this moment is so greatly in favour, I hate it mortally; and of all the vices I find no other that testifies to so much cowardice and baseness of heart. It is a dastardly and servile humour for a man to disguise and conceal himself behind a mask, and not to dare to show himself as he is, and not to dare to show his face in public.[3] Thus our men train themselves to perfidy: (*b*) being accustomed to utter false words, they do not scruple to break them. (*a*) A generous heart should not belie its thoughts; it desires that there should be seen even what is within just as it is; for there is nothing that is not worthy to be seen.[4] (*c*) Every thing there is good, or, at least, every thing there is human.

Aristotle considers it the special office of high-mindedness to hate and to love openly, to judge, to speak with entire freedom, and, in comparison with truth, to pay no attention to the approbation or reprobation of others.[5] (*a*) Apollonius said that it was for slaves to lie and for free men to speak the truth.[6] (*c*) It is the principal and fundamental part of virtue. It must be loved for itself. He who speaks the truth because he is elsewise so compelled, and because it is useful, and who does not fear to tell a lie when it matters to no one — he is not sufficiently truthful. My soul, by its nature, shuns falsehood and hates even to think a false-

[1] Nothing is so popular as goodness. — Cicero, *Pro Ligario*, 10.
[2] *Plustost lairrois je rompre le col aux affaires.*
[3] The last clause (*Édition Municipale*) was omitted in 1595.
[4] The last clause (*Édition Municipale*) was omitted in 1595.
[5] See Aristotle, *Nicomachæan Ethics*, IV, 8.
[6] See Apollonius, *Letters*, 83. This sentence was added in 1582.

hood. I feel inward shame and sharp remorse if sometimes it escapes me — as sometimes it does, unlooked-for circumstances surprising and moving me. (*a*) Every thing must not always be said, for that would be folly; but what one says should be what one thinks; otherwise it is knavery. I know not what advantage they expect from incessantly feigning and dissembling unless it be not to be believed even when they speak the truth; it may deceive men once or twice; but to make open profession of concealing one's thoughts, and to boast, as some of our princes have done,[1] that they would throw their shirt into the fire if it were privy to their real intentions (which is a saying of old Metellus Macedonicus),[2] and that he who does not know how to dissemble does not know how to reign, is to give warning to those who have to do with them that what they say is all trickery and falsehood. (*c*) *Quo quis versutior et callidior est, hoc invisior et suspectior, detracta opinione probitatis.*[3] (*a*) It would be great ignorance in one who should allow himself to be misled, either by the face or by the words of him who makes it his business to be always other outside than he is within, as Tiberius did;[4] and I know not what part such persons can have in human intercourse, producing nothing which can be received for current coin. (*b*) He who is faithless to the truth is so to falsehood also.

(*c*) Those who, in our day, have considered, in settling the duty of a prince, what is well for his affairs alone, and have placed this before regard for his faith and conscience,[5] would mean something to a prince whose affairs fortune had arranged in such a manner that he could settle them for all time by a single failure to keep his word. But it does not happen thus. He often falls again into a similar bargain; he makes more than one peace, more than one treaty, in his life. The profit which tempts them to the first disloyalty (and almost always it appears in the same guise as all other

[1] Charles VIII. See G. Corrozet, *Propos Memorables*.

[2] See Aurelius Victor, *De Viris Illustribus*, LXVI.

[3] The more subtle and astute a man is, the more he is hated and suspected if his reputation for integrity be lost. — Cicero, *De Off.*, II, 9.

[4] See Tacitus, *Annals*, I, 11.

[5] An allusion to Machiavelli, whose *Prince* was then the subject of much controversy.

villainies: sacrileges, murders, rebellions, treasons, are undertaken for some kind of benefit), that first profit brings about endless harmful consequences, throwing that prince outside all intercourse and every means of negotiation, by this example of infidelity.

Solyman of the Ottoman race, — a race little heedful of the observance of promises and pacts, — when, in my childhood, he went down to Otranto, having learned that Mercurin de Gratinare and the inhabitants of Castro were held captive after having surrendered the place, contrary to the terms of the capitulation arranged with them, sent word that they should be released and that, as he had in hand other great undertakings in that land, such disloyalty, although it might appear to be of immediate use, would bring upon him in the future an infinitely prejudicial discredit and distrust.[1]

(*a*) Now, for myself, I prefer to be annoying and indiscreet, rather than flattering and dissembling. (*b*) I acknowledge that there may be some touch of pride and self-will in holding oneself so without reserve and candid as I do, without consideration of others; and it seems to me that I become a little more outspoken where I should be less so, and that I wax the hotter in upholding my opinion, the more respect I owe to the person I am talking with.[2] It may be, too, that I let myself go in accordance with my nature, for lack of skill. Employing with those of high rank the same freedom of language and of bearing that I use in my own house, I feel how it inclines toward indiscretion and incivility. But, besides that I am so made, my mind is not quick enough to evade a sudden claim upon it and to escape by some shift, or to forge a truth; [3] nor is my memory good enough to remember it when thus forged; nor, it is certain, have I assurance enough to uphold it; and I play the braggart from lack of ability. Therefore I abandon myself, both by temperament and by intention, to what is natural to me

[1] These facts came originally from Paulus Jovius, *Historiarum sui temporis libri*, but Montaigne took them from Machiavelli's *Thesoro Politico*, II, 5.

[2] *Et que je m'eschauffe par l'opposition du respect.*

[3] That is, what seems to be a truth.

and to saying always what I think, leaving it to fortune to guide the event. (*c*) Aristippus said that the chief advantage he had derived from philosophy was that he spoke freely and openly to every one.[1]

(*a*) The memory is an instrument of wonderful service, and one without which the judgement can hardly perform its office; I altogether lack it.[2] Whatever any one desires to put before me, it must be little by little. For to reply to a discourse in which there are several different heads is not in my power. I could not receive a commission without writing-tablets. And when I have a discourse of importance to make, if it be long, I am reduced to the mean and miserable necessity of learning by heart, word for word, what I have to say; otherwise, I should have neither method nor confidence, being in fear that my memory would play me a bad trick. (*c*) But this way is no less difficult for me. To learn three lines takes me three hours; and then, in a composition of my own, the liberty and authority to shift the order, to change a word, constantly varying the substance, makes it more difficult to keep in mind. (*a*) Now, the more I challenge her,[3] the more confused she becomes; she serves me better unexpectedly; I must needs solicit her carelessly, for, if I press her, she is abashed; and when she has begun to stammer, the more I sound her, the more entangled and embarrassed she becomes; she serves me at her own hour, not at mine. This which I am conscious of about memory I am conscious of in many other directions. I shun all command, obligation, and constraint. That which I do easily and naturally, I can no longer do if I order myself to do it by an express and definite order.

Even in my body, the organs which have some freedom and a more special jurisdiction over themselves sometimes refuse to obey me, when I assign and bind them to a fixed point at a fixed hour of necessary service. This constraint and tyrannical foreordaining offends them; they stand still in fright or spite, and stiffen themselves.

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristippus*.

[2] Montaigne has much to say of his poor memory in Book I, chap. 9 (Vol. I, pp. 41ff.).

[3] That is, the memory.

(*b*) In former days, being in a place where it is considered a barbarous discourtesy not to respond to those who invite you to drink, although I was treated there with entire freedom, I tried, in honour of the ladies who were of the party, to play the good fellow according to the custom of the country. But it was matter for mirth; for this being threatened, and prepared to have to force myself contrary to my custom and my inclination, so choked my throat that I could not swallow a single drop, and was deprived of drink, even to the amount necessary for my repast. I found myself satiated and my thirst quenched by all the drinking that my imagination had done in anticipation. (*a*) This effect is most manifest in those whose imagination is most vigorous and powerful; but it is, however, natural, and there is no one who does not feel it in some degree. An excellent archer, condemned to death, was offered his life if he would give a noteworthy proof of his skill; he refused to try to do this, fearing that the too great eagerness of his desire would cause his hand to swerve, and that, instead of saving his life, he would lose also the reputation he had won as a marksman. A man whose thoughts are elsewhere will not fail to take, again and again, the same number and length of steps, almost to an inch, in the place where he is walking; but if he sets himself to measure and count them attentively, he will find that what he did by nature and by chance, he will not do so accurately by design.

My bookroom, which is one of the finest of those not in a city,[1] is situated in a corner of my house; if there comes into my mind something which I wish to go there to find or to write, for fear that, while merely crossing my court yard, it may escape me, I must entrust it to some one else. If I venture, in talking, to turn aside ever so little from my path, I never fail to lose it; which causes me to keep myself, in my talk, restrained, dry, and terse. I am obliged to call the people in my service by the names of their offices or their provinces, for it is very difficult[2] for me to remember a name. (*b*) I can tell, to be sure, that it has three syllables, that it is harsh-sounding, that it begins or ends with a certain letter.

[1] *Entre les libreries de village.*

[2] In 1580: *car il m'est impossible.*

(*a*) And if my life should last long, I believe that I should not fail to remember my own name, as others have done. (*b*) Messala Corvinus was for two years without any trace of memory,[1] (*c*) which is told also of George of Trebizond; (*b*) and as something that concerns me, I often meditate upon what sort of life theirs was, and whether, without that faculty, I shall have enough left to support me with some comfort; and looking at it closely, I fear that that failing, if it be complete, destroys all the activities of the soul. (*c*) *Memoria certe non modo philosophiam, sed omnis vitæ usum omnesque artes una maxime continet.*[2]

(*a*) Plenus rimarum sum, hac atque illac effluo.[3]

It has happened to me more than once to forget the password which, three hours before, I had given to or received from another; (*c*) and to forget where I had hidden my purse, whatever Cicero may say.[4] I help myself to lose what I put away with special care.

(*a*) The memory is the receptacle and envelope of learning; mine being so defective, I have not much right to complain if I know little. I know, in general, the names of the arts and what they treat of, but nothing beyond that. I turn the leaves of books, I do not study them; what I retain of them is something which I do not recognise as coming from another: it is that alone by which my judgement has profited, the reasonings and the imaginations with which it is imbued; the author, the place, the words, and other facts — these I straightway forget. (*b*) And I am so excellent in forgetfulness that even my own writings and compositions I forget no less than the rest. People frequently quote me to myself without my perceiving it. Whoever might desire to know whence come the verses and examples which I have here piled up would put me in a quandary to tell him; and

[1] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 24, where it is said simply that he forgot his own name.

[2] Certainly memory is the receptacle, not only of philosophy, but especially of all that appertains to the use of life and of all arts. — Cicero, *Academica*, II, 7.

[3] I am full of cracks; I leak on every side. —Terence, *Eunuchus*, I, 2.25.

[4] See *De Senectute*, VII: *Nec vero quemquam senum audivi oblitum quo loco thesaurum obruisset.*

yet I have craved alms only at well-known and famous doors, not contenting myself with their being rich, if they did not also come from a rich and honourable hand; authority concurs in them with reason. (*c*) It is no great wonder if my own book has the fate of other books, and if my memory loses hold of what I write as of what I read, and of what I give as of what I receive.

(*a*) In addition to my lack of memory, I have other lacks which greatly contribute to my ignorance. My mind is lazy and not keen; it can not pierce the least cloud,[1] so that, for example, I never proposed to it any riddle easy enough for it to solve. There is no subtlety so foolish that does not embarrass me. In games in which the mind has its share,— chess, cards, draughts, and the like, — I understand only the plainest processes. My apprehension is slow and confused; but what it once grasps, it grasps well, and embraces it very completely, tightly, and profoundly, so long as it grasps it. My sight is long, sound, and perfect, but is easily tired by work and becomes dim; for this reason I can not have long-continued intercourse with books, save by means of another's service. The younger Pliny [2] will inform those who have not tried it how much this hindrance matters to those who devote themselves to this occupation.

There is no soul so needy [3] and so brutish wherein some special faculty may not be seen to shine; there is none so buried that it does not jut out at some point. And how it happens that a soul that is blind and slumbering about all other things is quick and clear-sighted and excelling in a certain special matter, we must enquire of our masters. But the noble souls are the souls of universal powers, open, and thoroughly prepared; (*c*) instructible at least, if not instructed; (*a*) which I say, impeaching my own; for, whether from weakness or from indifference (and to be indifferent to what lies at our feet, to what we hold in our hands, which concerns most nearly the habits of life, is far removed from my doctrine),[4] there is none so inept as mine, or so ignorant

[1] *Tardif et mousse; le moindre nuage luy arreste sa pointe.*

[2] "Coste refers to *Epistle* 3. I doubt if Montaigne alludes to that letter, but I have found no better source to suggest." — M. Villey.

[3] *Si chetive.* [4] In 1580–1588: *c'est à mon advis une bien lourde faute.*

of many common things of which a man can not without shame be ignorant. I must tell some examples of this.

I was born and brought up in the country, and among husbandmen; I have had business affairs and household matters in my hands since my predecessors in the possession of the property that I enjoy yielded up their place to me. Now I know not how to reckon, either with counters or with the pen; I am not familiar with most of our coins; nor do I know the difference between one kind of grain and another, either in the field or in the granary, unless it is too apparent; nor scarcely that between the cabbages and lettuce of my garden. I do not even know the names of the commonest household utensils, or the most elementary principles of agriculture, which children know; (*b*) still less of the mechanical arts, about traffic in and knowledge of merchandise, the diversity and nature of fruits, wines, food; nor how to train a bird, or doctor a horse or a dog. (*a*) And, since I must needs make a clean breast of my shame, it is not a month since I was found ignorant of how leaven is of use in making bread, (*c*) and the object of putting wine in vats. (*a*) Anciently, at Athens,[1] an aptitude for mathematics was conjectured in him who was seen ingeniously arranging and binding a bundle of sticks. Truly, one would draw a very opposite conclusion about me; for, give me all the apparatus of a kitchen, I should none the less starve; and I greatly doubt, even if I had a horse and his trappings, whether I should have the intelligence to train him to be of service to me.[2]

From these articles of my confession, others can be imagined at my expense. But, howsoever I make myself known, provided that I make myself known for what I am, I effect my purpose. And therefore I do not apologise for venturing to put in writing matters so mean and trivial as these. The meanness of the subject compels me to do it. (*c*) My project may be blamed, but my treatment of it, no. (*a*) However that may be, I see plainly enough, without be-

[1] Abdera. It was Democritus who drew this conclusion from what he saw Protagoras doing. See Aulus Gellius, V, 3.

[2] The last clauses, of the text of 1580, from "I greatly doubt," were omitted in all the later editions.

ing warned by others, how little value and weight all this has, and the inadvisedness of my design. It is enough that my judgement is not confused, which is here put to the proof.

Nasutus sis usque licet, sis denique nasus,
Quantum noluerit ferre rogatus Athlas,
Et possis ipsum tu deridere Latinum,
Non potes in nugas dicere plura meas,
Ipse ego quam dixi; quid dentem dente juvabit
Rodere? carne opus est, si satur esse velis.
Ne perdas operam; qui se mirantur, in illos
Virus habe; nos hæc novimus esse nihil.[1]

I am under no obligation not to say foolish things, provided that I am not deceived, and recognise them as such. And to fall short consciously is so common with me that I seldom fall short otherwise: I scarcely ever fall short by accident. It is a small matter to make the indiscretion of my disposition responsible for foolish acts, since I can not prevent myself ordinarily from making it responsible for vicious ones.

I saw one day, at Bar-le-Duc,[2] presented to King Francis II, as a tribute to the memory of King René of Sicily, a portrait that he himself had painted of himself. Why is it not permissible, in like manner, for every man to draw himself with the pen as he drew himself with a pencil? Therefore I do not wish to forget this other blemish, which it is very undesirable to set forth publicly: that is, irresolution, a very inconvenient defect in the management of the affairs of the world. I know not which side to take in doubtful undertakings, —

(*b*) Ne si, ne no, nel cor mi suona intero.[3]

[1] Let your nose be as keen as you will; be all nose, even one that Atlas, being asked, will refuse to bear, and deride Latinus himself — you can not speak worse of my trifles than I myself have spoken. What pleasure is there in grinding tooth against tooth? You must have food if you would satisfy your hunger. Do not waste your labour; on those who admire themselves use your venom; I know these things of mine to be nothing. — Martial, XIII, 2.1.

[2] In September, 1559.

[3] Neither yes nor no sounds clearly in my heart. — Petrarch, *Sonnet* 135. The quotation and the next sentence were added in 1582.

I know well how to maintain an opinion, but not how to choose it.

(*a*) Because, in human affairs, to whatever faction one inclines, many aspects present themselves to confirm us in it (*c*) (and the philosopher Chrysippus said that he desired to learn from Zeno and Cleanthes simply dogmas; for, as for proofs and arguments, he could supply enough of those for himself[1]), (*a*) to whichever side I turn, I always furnish myself with enough ground and probability to maintain myself in it. Thus I retain within myself doubt and freedom of choice, until I am forced by circumstances. And then, to confess the truth, I generally throw the feather to the wind, as the saying is, and abandon myself to the mercy of fortune; a very slight preference and circumstance wins me over.

Dum in dubio est animus, paulo momento huc atque illuc impellitur.[2]

The uncertainty of my judgement is so evenly balanced in most occurrences that I would readily commit myself to the decision of fate and the dice; and I observe, after giving much thought to our human weakness, the examples that divine history itself has left us of this custom of remitting to fortune and to chance the determination of selection in doubtful matters; *sors cecidit super Mathiam*.[3] (*c*) The human reason is a two-edged and dangerous sword. And even in the hand of Socrates, its closest and most familiar friend, see what a many-ended staff it is!

(*a*) Thus I am fitted only for following, and I readily allow myself to be carried along by the crowd; I do not enough trust my abilities to undertake to command or to guide; I am very glad to find my steps marked out by others. If the risk of a doubtful choice must be incurred, I prefer that it should be under one who is more certain of his opinions, and more wedded to them than I am to mine, (*b*) of which I find the substructure and foundation to be unsure. And yet I do not too easily change, inasmuch as I detect a similar weak-

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Chrysippus*.

[2] When the mind is in doubt, a slight impulse impels it hither and thither. — Terence, *Andria*, I, 6.32.

[3] The lot fell upon Mathias. — *Acts*, I, 26.

ness in the contrary opinions. (*c*) *Ipsa consuetudo assentiendi periculosa esse videtur et lubrica.*[1] (*a*) Especially in political affairs there is a fine field open for movement and contestation;

> Justa pari premitur veluti cum pondere libra
> Prona, nec hac plus parte sedet, nec surgit ab illa.[2]

The reasonings of Machiavelli, for example, were sufficiently solid as to the subject-matter, yet it is very easy to combat them; and they who have done so have left no less facility for combatting theirs. There would always be found in such an argument material for replies, rejoinders, replications, surrejoinders, sur-surrejoinders, and that endless chain of discussions which our chicanery drags out as much as possible in favour of lawsuits, —

> Cædimur, et totidem plagis consumimus hostem,[3] —

the reasons given having little other foundation than experience; and the diversity of human events furnishes us with innumerable examples in every variety of form.

A wise person of our day says that in our almanacs, where they say hot if one should choose to say cold, and damp in lieu of dry, and always set down the contrary of what they predict, were he to wager as to the happening of one or the other, he would not care which side he took, except in matters where no uncertainty can exist, as to promise extreme heat at Christmas and the severities of winter at midsummer. I think the same of these political reasonings: whatever part you assume, you can make as good play as your fellow, provided that you do not run counter to fundamental principles that are recognised and evident.[4] And therefore, to my thinking, there is in public affairs no condition, even a bad one, provided that it is of long standing and persistent, which is not to be preferred to change and commotion.

[1] The habit of assenting seems to be dangerous and slippery. — Cicero, *Academica*, II, 21.

[2] As when a just balance is pressed upon with equal weights, its scales neither fall on this side nor rise on that. — Tibullus, IV, 1.40.

[3] We are struck, and we overwhelm our enemy with as many blows. — Horace, *Epistles*, II, 2.97.

[4] *Principes trop grossiers et apparens.*

Our morals are exceedingly corrupt, and have a wonderful tendency to grow worse. Of our laws and customs there are many that are barbarous and monstrous; however, because of the difficulty of bringing ourselves into a better condition, and the danger of shaking the structure, if I could put a spoke in our wheel and stop it at this point, I would do so with a good will.

(*b*) Nunquam adeo fœdis adeoque pudendis
Utimur exemplis ut non pejora supersint.[1]

(*a*) The worst thing that I find about our state is its instability, and that our laws, no more than our garments, can take permanent form. It is very easy to accuse a government of imperfection, for all mortal things are full of that; it is very easy to engender in a people contempt for its ancient observances; no man ever undertakes that, who does not succeed; but to establish a better state in the place of that which they have destroyed — in this, many who have undertaken it have laboured in vain.

(*c*) I give little heed to circumspection in my conduct; I readily let myself be guided by the public order of the world. Happy the people who do what they are commanded better than they who command, without troubling themselves about the reasons; who let themselves gently revolve with the heavenly revolving! Obedience is never pure or untroubled in him who reasons and who argues.

(*a*) In fine, to return to myself, the only thing in which I deem myself of some account is that in which no man ever deems himself lacking; what is commendable in me is common, general, and of small account; for who ever thought that he had not good sense? That would be a proposition which would in itself imply a contradiction; (*c*) it is a disease that never exists when it is seen; it is very tenacious and powerful, but nevertheless is penetrated and dispersed by the first ray of the patient's vision, as a dense mist by the sun's beams. (*a*) To accuse oneself in this respect would be to excuse oneself; and to condemn oneself would be to absolve oneself. There never was a porter or a foolish woman

[1] The examples we make use of are never so foul and so shameful that there are not others that go beyond them. — Juvenal, VIII, 183.

who was not sure of being sufficiently supplied with good sense. We easily recognise in others superiority of courage, of bodily strength, of experience, of activity, of beauty, of rank; but superiority of judgement we concede to no one; and the reasonings that proceed from simple natural intelligence in another, it seems to us that, had we but looked in that direction, we should have found them. The learning, the style, and such other qualities as we see in works unlike our own,[1] we readily recognise as surpassing our own; but as to the simple products of the understanding, every one thinks that it was in him to meet with the like; and he hardly perceives the effort and difficulty of so doing, (*c*) unless they be at an extreme and incomparable distance, and scarcely then.[2] (*a*) Thus it[3] is a sort of exercitation for which very little commendation and praise can be hoped, and a kind of composition of little repute.

(*c*) And then, too, for whom do you write? The scholars, to whom jurisdiction in bookish matters belongs, recognise no other value than that of learning, and approve no other course in our minds than that of erudition and skill; if you have mistaken one of the Scipios for the other, what have you left to say that is of any value? He who knows nothing of Aristotle, at the same time, according to them, knows nothing of himself. Common and uncultured souls do not see the charm and weight of a lofty and refined discourse. Now these two kinds[4] fill the world. The third kind, — into whose hands your work falls,[5] — of souls well governed and strong in themselves, is so rare that it has consequently neither name nor rank amongst us; it is time half lost to aspire and strive to please it.

(*a*) It is commonly said that the fairest division of her favours that Nature has made amongst us is that of good sense; for there is no one who is not content with what she has bestowed on him. (*c*) Is not that natural? He who

[1] *Es ouvrages estrangers.*

[2] The edition of 1595 and all subsequent editions based upon it add at this point: *Et qui verroit bien à clair la hauteur d'un jugement estranger, il y arriveroit, et y porteroit le sien.*

[3] That is, good sense.

[4] That is, the scholars, and the common and uncultured souls.

[5] *A qui vous tombez en partage.*

should see further would see beyond his sight. (*a*) I think my opinions to be good and sound; but who does not think the same of his? One of the strongest proofs that I have of this is the small value I set upon myself; for if they [1] had not been very stable, they would easily have let themselves be cheated by the peculiar affection I bear myself, as one who gathers it all, as it were, unto myself and who scatters it little outside. All that which others distribute among an infinite multitude of friends and acquaintances, to their glory and their greatness, I devote entirely to my health, to my repose of mind, and to myself in general. What of it escapes me elsewhere is not really under the direction of my reason, —

mihi nempe valere et vivere doctus.[2]

Now I find my opinions infinitely bold and unyielding in condemning my own insufficiency. In truth, this also is a subject on which I exercise my judgement as much as on any other. The world looks always outward; for my part, I turn my sight within myself, I fix it and employ it there. Every one looks before himself; I look within myself; I have to do only with myself; I scrutinise myself incessantly; I criticise myself, I taste myself. Others are always going elsewhere if they will but think of it; they are always going forward, —

nemo in sese tentat descendere,[3] —

but as for me, I revolve within myself.

This faculty of culling out the truth, as it exists within myself, and this free propensity not easily to fetter my beliefs, I owe chiefly to myself; for the most stable and general ideas that I have are those which were, so to speak, born with me. They are natural, and wholly my own. I produced them crude and simple, with a bold and vigorous production, but a little confused and imperfect; since then I have established and fortified them by others' authority, and by the sound examples of ancient writers, with whose judgement I have

[1] That is, my opinions.

[2] Trained, indeed, to consider myself and live for myself. — Lucretius, V, 961. The original text is slightly changed.

[3] No man attempts to enter into himself. — Persius, IV, 23.

found myself in agreement; these have strengthened my grasp of them and have given me more complete enjoyment and possession of them. (*b*) The commendation that every one seeks for activity and readiness of mind, I claim for regularity; that which is sought for a brilliant and noteworthy act, I claim for the uniformity, consistency, and equableness of my opinions and morals. (*c*) *Omnino, si quidquam est decorum, nihil est profecto magis quam æquabilitas universæ vitæ, tum singularum actionum; quam conservare non possis, si, aliorum naturam imitans, omittas tuam.*[1]

(*a*) This, then, is as far as I feel myself guilty of that first part [2] which I said existed in the vice of presumption. As for the second, which consists in not valuing others highly enough, I do not know if I can so well excuse myself regarding it; for, whatever it may cost me, I propose to say how the matter stands. Peradventure the constant intercourse that I have with ancient modes of thought, and the conception of those great souls of past times, disgusts me both with others and with myself; or else, in truth, we live in an age which produces only very mediocre things; so it is that I know nothing worthy of great admiration; besides, I know few men as intimately as is necessary to be able to judge them; and those with whom my social position most commonly connects me are, for the most part, persons who pay little heed to cultivation of the soul, and for whom all beatitude lies in honour, all perfection in valour. What I see that is fine in another, that I readily praise and esteem; nay, I often exaggerate what I think about it and give myself leave to lie to that extent. But I do not know how to invent what is wholly false. I readily bear witness about my friends in respect to what I find praiseworthy in them; and of a foot of merit I readily make a foot and a half. But to ascribe to them qualities which are not in them, that I can not do, nor defend them openly in regard to the imperfections they have.

[1] If there be any thing entirely admirable, nothing is more so than equableness in the whole life and in its several acts; and this can not be attained if, imitating the characters of other men, you set aside your own. — Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 31.

[2] That is, *s'estimer trop.*

(*b*) Even to my enemies I frankly render what is due from me of honourable testimony. (*c*) My feeling changes, not my judgement. (*b*) And I do not confuse my quarrel with other matters that do not belong with it; and I am so jealous of the independence of my judgement that I can hardly forsake it for any passion whatsoever. (*c*) I do to myself more injury by lying than I do to him about whom I lie. There is observed in the Persian nation this praiseworthy and generous custom, that they speak of their mortal enemies, with whom they are at deadly war, honourably and fairly, so far as the merit of their valour deserves.

(*a*) I know men enough who have diverse fine parts: one, the mind; another, the heart; another, authority; [1] another, conscience; another, eloquence; another, one branch of learning; another, another. But a man great as a whole, not perfect, but yet having so many noble qualities combined, or one in such a degree of excellence that he may be wondered at or compared with those men of past time whom we honour — no such man has my fortune shown me. And the greatest man I have known in life — I mean in natural qualities of the mind, and the best trained [2] — was Étienne de la Boëtie: his was truly a well-rounded soul, which presented a noble aspect on all sides; a soul of the old stamp, and one which would have produced great things had his fortune so willed; for he had added much to that richly endowed nature by learning and study.

But I know not how it happens (*c*) (and yet it unquestionably does happen), (*a*) that there is as much emptiness and weakness of understanding as in any other class of persons, in those who profess to have the most knowledge, who deal with lettered occupations, and with offices which have to do with books and learning; either because more is demanded and expected from them than from the ignorant, and common faults can not be excused in them; or because their belief in their knowledge makes them bolder to put themselves forward and lay themselves too open, whereby they betray and ruin themselves. Just as a craftsman manifests his lack of skill much more completely on a valuable

[1] *L'adresse.* [2] *Le mieux.*

material that he has in his hands, if he handles it and botches it stupidly and contrary to the rule of his trade, than on a mean material, and we are more displeased by a defect in a statue of gold than in one of plaster, so do these when they exhibit thoughts which, in themselves and in their place, would be well; for they make use of them without discretion, doing honour to their memory at the expense of their understanding: they do honour to Cicero, Galen, Ulpian, and St. Hierosmus,[1] and make themselves ridiculous.

I recur readily to discourse on the utility of our education:[2] its aim has been to make us, not good men and wise, but learned; it has succeeded. It has not taught us to follow and embrace virtue and wisdom, but it has impressed on us their verbal derivation and etymology. We know how to decline virtue, if we do not know how to love it; if we do not know what wisdom is, by results and by experience, we know it by unmeaning words and by hearsay.[3] Of our neighbours we are not content to know the family, the kindred, and the marriages: we wish to have them for friends, and to enter into some intercourse and understanding with them; our education has taught us the definitions, the divisions and the subdivisions of virtue, like the surnames and branches of a genealogy, without taking the further care to bring about any habit of intimacy and personal intercourse between us and it.[4] It [5] has chosen for our instruction, not the books which contain the soundest and truest opinions, but those which speak the purest Greek and Latin; and, amidst fine sayings, has poured into our imagination the idlest fancies of antiquity. A good education changes the judgement and the character; as happened to Polemo, that dissolute young Greek, who, having by chance gone to hear a lecture of Xenocrates, (*c*) not only remarked the eloquence and ability of the lecturer, but (*a*) carried home with him, not only learning of fine quality, but a more visible and more substantial fruit, which was the sudden change and

[1] That is, Jerome.
[2] Which he has already discussed at great length in Book I, chap. 26.
[3] *Par jargon et par cœur.*
[4] That is, virtue.
[5] That is, our education.

improvement in his former life.[1] Who has ever felt such an effect from our education?

> Faciasne quod olim
> Mutatus Polemon? ponas insignia morbi,
> Fasciolas, cubital, focalia, potus ut ille
> Dicitur ex collo furtim carpsisse coronas,
> Postquam est impransi correptus voce magistri?[2]

(*c*) The least contemptible kind of man seems to me to be that which, from its naturalness, has the lowest rank, and exhibits to us a more even intercourse. The characters and talk of peasants I find to be commonly more in accordance with the injunctions of true philosophy than are those of our philosophers. *Plus sapit vulgus, quia tantum quantum opus est, sapit.*[3]

(*a*) The most notable men whom I have judged by external appearances (for, to judge them after my fashion, it would be needful to observe them more closely) are, for conduct in war and for military ability, the duc de Guise, who died at Orléans, and the late Marshal Strozzi; amongst men of general ability,[4] and of no common goodness, Olivier and L'Hôpital, chancellors of France. It seems to me, too, with respect to poetry, that it has had full vogue in our time. We have abundance of good craftsmen in that trade: Aurat,[5] Bèze, Buchanan, L'Hôpital, Mont-doré, Turnebus. As for the Frenchmen, I think that they have raised it to the highest point which it will ever reach; and in those qualities in which Ronsard and du Bellay excel I find little short of ancient perfection. Adrianus Turnebus knew more, and knew better what he knew, than any man of his day or long before.

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Polemo;* Valerius Maximus, VI, 9, *ext.* 1.

[2] Should you not do what the converted Polemo did? Should you not lay aside the tokens of your disease, the leg- and the arm- and the neck-wrappings, as he is said to have slipped from his neck, unobserved, the wreaths, when, drunk, he was sharply reprimanded by the voice of a master who was fasting? — Horace, *Satires*, II, 3.253.

[3] The common people are wiser because they are wise only so much as is needful. — Lactantius, *Institutiones Divinæ*, III, 5. Taken by Montaigne from the *Politics* of Justus Lipsius, I, 10.

[4] *Pour gens suffisans.*

[5] In Latin, Auratus; in French, Dorat or Daurat.

(*b*) The lives of the Duke of Alba, lately deceased, and of our connétable de Montmorency, were famous lives, and had many unusual similarities of fortune; but the beauty and the glory of the death of the latter, before the eyes of Paris and of his king, in their service, against his nearest kindred, at the head of an army victorious through his leadership, and by a surprise, in such extreme old age, seems to me worthy to be placed among the remarkable events of my time. (*c*) As likewise the unfailing kindness, gentleness of character, and conscientious lenity of Monsieur de la Noue, amidst all the absence of justice of armed factions, — a veritable school of treason, inhumanity, and brigandage, in which he had always been brought up, — a great soldier and well proved.

I have taken great pleasure in proclaiming in many places the hopes I have of Marie de Gournay le Jars, my daughter by agreement,[1] and certainly beloved by me much more than paternally, and included in my retirement and solitude as one of the best parts of my own existence. I no longer am interested in any thing in the world save her. If youth can give promise, that soul will be capable some day of the best things, and, among others, of the perfection of that most sacred friendship to which we do not read that her sex has ever yet been able to attain. The sincerity and steadfastness of her character are already sufficient for this; her affection for me is more than superabundant, and such, in fine, that it would leave nothing to be desired, if the dread she has of my death, because of my five-and-fifty years when she met me, disquieted her less cruelly. The judgement that she, a woman, and in those days, and so young and alone in her district, formed of the first Essays, and the wonderful vehemence with which for a long time she loved me and longed to see me, solely from the esteem which she conceived from them for me before having seen me, is a matter well worth consideration.[2]

(*a*) The other virtues have had little or no currency in this age, but valour has become general from our civil wars; and

[1] *Ma fille d'alliance.*

[2] This passage does not appear on the Bordeaux copy of 1588, but was added in 1595. See the Introduction to this chapter.

in this quality there are found among us souls steadfast to perfection, and in great numbers, so that selection among them is impossible. This is all that I have known, to the present moment, of extraordinary and unusual greatness.

CHAPTER XVIII

OF GIVING THE LIE

It is not easy to say why this Essay is entitled "Of Giving the Lie" rather than "Of Lying." Be that as it may, the introduction to the subject is longer than the treatment of the subject itself, and is more interesting.

We come to the matter of lying only after three or four previous pages filled with a charming plea of excuse for writing about himself, which is like an echo — a reverberating echo — of the *avant-propos* of the book, "The author to the reader." There is a delightful passage about his interest in the modes of living, the actions, the looks and words of his ancestors, and a droll gibe at his posterity, if it be different in this respect from himself.

Just following this is a passage, added in 1595, of peculiar interest as a piece of mental biography: "Modelling this figure after myself," and what follows.

And then we reach the point that he has been slowly approaching, and he questions: Who can be believed, nowadays, about himself, when so few men can be believed about any thing?

The passage is a fine one, — Montaigne is always eloquent and forcible in his praises of truth, — and in conclusion he touches on the special point of the Essay, without enlarging on it, and promises to return to it on some other occasion — which he failed to do.

A comparison of this Essay with that "Of Liars" (Book I, chapter 9) shows how much Montaigne had gained in vigour of thought and fineness of expression.

YES, but I shall be told that this plan of making use of oneself as a subject to write about would be excusable in exceptional and famous men, who, by their reputation, had caused some desire for their acquaintance. It is beyond question; I admit it; and I know well that, to look at a man of the common sort, an artisan will hardly lift his eyes from his task; whereas, to see a great and renowned personage enter a city, the workrooms and shops are deserted. It is unfitting for any other

to make himself known save him who has something to invite imitation, and whose life and opinions may serve as a pattern. Cæsar and Xenophon had the wherewithal to base and strengthen their narratives on the magnitude of their deeds, as on a reasonable and enduring foundation. And it is to be wished that we had the daily records of Alexander the Great, and the notes that Augustus, Cato, Sylla, Brutus, and others may have left of their actions. Of such personages the figures are admired and studied even in copper and in stone.

This remonstrance is very just, but it concerns me very little: —

> Non recito cuiquam, nisi amicis, idque rogatus,
> Non ubivis, coramve quibuslibet. In medio qui
> Scripta foro recitent, sunt multi, quique lavantes.[1]

I am not erecting here a statue to be set in a city street, or in a church, or in a public square.

> (*b*) Non equidem hoc studeo, bullatis ut mihi nugis
> Pagina turgescat. . . .
> Secreti loquimur.[2]

(*a*) It is for the corner of a library, and for the entertainment of a neighbour, a kinsman, or a friend, who may have pleasure in renewing acquaintance and familiarity with me through this picture. Others have taken courage to speak of themselves from having found the subject worthy and fruitful; I, on the contrary, from having found it so sterile and meagre that no suspicion of ostentation can attach to it.

(*c*) I freely pass judgement on the acts of others; of my own I give little ground for judgement because of their nullity. (*b*) I do not find so much good in myself that I can not tell about it without blushing. (*a*) What pleasure it would give me to hear some one thus describe to me the manners, (*c*) the appearance, the demeanour, the most ordinary speech,

[1] I do not recite my verses except to friends, and that only when invited; not everywhere, or to every one. But there are many who, in the middle of the forum, or when bathing, recite their writings. — Horace, *Satires*, I, 4.73.

[2] Truly, I do not study to swell my page with pretentious trifles. . . . We talk together privately. — Persius, V, 19.

(*a*) and the fortunes of my ancestors! How attentively I should listen! Truly, it would give evidence of a bad nature, to hold in contempt even the portraits of our friends and predecessors. A dagger, a harness, a sword, which they have used, I preserve so far as I can from the inroads of time, for love of them;[1] (*c*) and I have not banished from my own room some long staves which my father usually carried in his hand. *Paterna vestis et annulus tanto charior est posteris, quanto erga parentes major affectus.*[2] (*a*) If, however, my posterity be of another mind, I shall have wherewith to be revenged; for they can not make less account of me than I shall of them in those days. All the dealing that I have with the public in this matter is that I borrow the tools of their writing as being quicker and more agreeable.[3] (*c*) As compensation, I shall perhaps prevent a pound of butter in the market-place from spoiling.

(*a*) Ne toga cordyllis, ne penula desit olivis.[4]

(*b*) Et laxas scombris sæpe dabo tunicas.[5]

(*c*) And, if no one shall read me, have I wasted my time in being occupied so many idle hours in such useful and agreeable thoughts? Modelling this figure after myself, I have been obliged so often to trim myself up and arrange myself, in order to give my outline,[6] that the model has consequently strengthened and, in some degree, shaped itself. Painting myself for others, I have painted myself in colours more distinct than were mine originally. I have no more created my book, than my book has created me — a book of the same substance as its author, with an occupation of its own, with its own business,[7] a member of my life; not with

[1] The last sentence is translated from the text of 1580 to 1588; in 1595 is added that he preserves *l'escriture, le seing, des heures et une espée peculiere.*

[2] The garment and the ring of a father are dear to his children in proportion to their love for him. — St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, I, 13.

[3] This means that printing is better than copies made by hand.

[4] That the tunny may not lack a coat, nor the olives hoods. — Martial, XIII, 1.1.

[5] And I shall often furnish a cloak for the mackerel. — Catullus, XCIV, 8.

[6] *Pour m'extraire.*

[7] That is, concerned only with me.

an external and alien business, like all other books. Have I wasted my time in taking account of myself so constantly, so minutely? For those who consider themselves in thought only, and in words now and then, do not examine themselves so exactly, or enter into themselves, as he who makes this his study, his business, and his occupation; who binds himself to a lasting record, with all the faithfulness and strength that he has.

The most delightful pleasures, being inwardly recognised, avoid giving any sign of themselves and avoid the observation, not only of the multitude, but of any one. How many times has this occupation diverted me from troublesome thoughts! and all trifling thoughts should be reckoned as troublesome. Nature has endowed us with a great faculty of conversing with ourselves apart; and often invites us to do so, to teach us that we owe ourselves in part to society, but for the most part to ourselves. To the end that I may school my imagination even to muse according to some order and plan, and to keep it from going astray and wandering at random, it is needful only to give shape to all the petty thoughts that offer themselves to it, and place them on record. I listen to my musings because I have to register them. How many times, being vexed by some act which civility and good sense forbade me to reprehend openly, have I here unburdened myself, not without a purpose of public instruction! And indeed these poetic scourges —

> Zon dessus l'œil, zon sur le groin,
> Zon sur le dos de Sagoin![1] —

make an even greater impression when on paper than when given on the living flesh. What if I lend my ear a little more attentively to books, since I have been on the watch to see if I can filch from them something wherewith to adorn or prop up my own? I have not at all studied to make a book; but I have studied somewhat because I had made it, if it be in any wise studying to select the best,[2] or to catch hold by the head or by the teeth, now of one author, now of another; not at all to form my opinions, but to aid those long ago formed, to second and support them.

[1] Clement Marot, *Fripelippes, valet de Marot, à Sagon.*
[2] *Effleurer.*

(*a*) But whom shall we believe when speaking of himself in such debased times, seeing that there are few, or none, whom we can believe when speaking of others, where there is less to gain by lying? The first feature of corruption of morals is the banishment of truth; for, as Pindar said, being truthful is the beginning of great virtue;[1] (*c*) and it is the first qualification that Plato requires in the governor of his Republic.[2] (*a*) Our truth nowadays is not what is, but what others may be persuaded of; as we call coin, not only that which is of good alloy,[3] but also the counterfeit which passes current. Our nation has long been reproached with this vice; for Salvianus Massiliensis, who was of the time of the Emperor Valentinian, said that to the French lying and perjury were not vices, but mere forms of speech.[4] He who would enhance this testimony might say that it is now a virtue in their eyes. Men form and fashion themselves to it as being an honourable practice; for dissimulation is among the most renowned qualities of this age. Consequently, I have often considered whence could arise this habit, which we retained so religiously, of feeling ourselves more bitterly injured by being charged with this vice, which is so common with us, than with any other; and that it is the greatest insult that can be offered us in words, to charge us with falsehood. Whence I conclude that it is natural to defend ourselves most earnestly for the faults to which we are most addicted. It seems that, in resenting the accusation and in being moved by it, we in some measure rid ourselves of the trespass; if we have it in fact, we condemn it to save appearances.

(*b*) May it not be, also, that this reproach seems to involve cowardice and faint-heartedness? Is there any more manifest expression of this than to belie one's word — nay, to belie one's knowledge? (*a*) Lying is a villainous vice, and an ancient writer depicts it as most shameful when he says that to lie is to manifest contempt of God together with fear of man.[5] It is not possible to represent more fully the

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Marius.*
[2] See the *Republic*, book III.
[3] *Qui est loyalle.*
[4] See his *De Gubernatione Dei*, I, 14.
[5] See Plutarch, *Life of Lysander.*

horror, the vileness, the outrageousness of it. For what can be conceived more villainous than to be cowardly with respect to men, and audacious with respect to God? Our intelligence being conducted solely by the way of the word, he who falsifies that betrays all society. It is the only instrument by means of which our desires and our thoughts are exchanged; it is the interpreter of our souls; if it fails us, we no longer have any hold upon one another, we no longer mutually know one another. If it deceives us, it severs all our intercourse and dissolves all the ties of our government.

(*b*) Certain nations of the new Indies (there is no need to note their names; they no longer exist; for the desolation of that conquest has extended even to the entire abolition of names and of the former knowledge of places; a wonderful and unheard-of instance) offer to their gods human blood, but no other than that taken from the tongue and ears, by way of expiation of the sin of falsehood, as well listened to as spoken. (*a*) That Greek worthy [1] said that children play with huckle-bones, men with words.

As for our different methods of giving the lie, and our laws of honour in that matter, and the changes they have undergone, I will postpone to another time saying what I know of them; and I will meanwhile learn, if I can, when this habit began of weighing our words so carefully, and of making our honour dependent upon them. For it is easy to judge that it did not exist of old among the Romans and the Greeks. And it has often seemed to me novel and strange, to see how they gave the lie and insulted one another, without consequently entering into a quarrel. The laws of what was due [2] took some other course than ours. They called Cæsar, to his face, sometimes a thief, sometimes a drunkard.[3] We see the freedom of the invectives they used against one another, — I mean the greatest war-chiefs of both nations,— when words were avenged solely by words, and involved no other consequence.

[1] Lysander. See Plutarch, *Life of Lysander*.
[2] *De leur devoir*.
[3] See Plutarch, *Life of Pompey* and *Life of Cato of Utica*.

CHAPTER XIX

OF LIBERTY OF CONSCIENCE

THE subject of this Essay is the Emperor Julian. The title arises from the consideration (in the last paragraph) of the policy of Julian in employing general tolerance — liberty of conscience — in the hope that this freedom would increase, to his gain, the dissensions of the people; a policy employed in Montaigne's own time by the kings of France (with regard to the Protestants), from precisely opposite intentions and hopes — at least, so Montaigne states.

Montaigne's view of the emperor is interesting, but has no peculiar value.

The first paragraph — concerning the moral conditions of those engaged in the civil wars of France — is perhaps as noteworthy as any; and the very first sentence is a characteristic expression of moral good sense.

IT is a common thing to see good intentions, if they are pursued without moderation, impel men to very wrong actions. In this dissension which now agitates France with civil war, the best and sanest party is, doubtless, that which upholds the old-time religion and government of the country. Among the worthy men who follow it, however (for I am not speaking of those who use it only as a pretext, either to wreak their private vengeances, or to gratify their eager desires, or to gain the favour of princes, but of those who follow it from genuine zeal for their religion and from a godly desire to maintain the peace and the good estate of their country), among these, I say, there are seen many whom passion carries beyond the bounds of reason, and sometimes leads to accept unjust, violent, and even reckless counsels.

It is certain that, in those early days when our religion began to gain authority with the laws, zeal armed many men against every sort of pagan books, whereby men of letters suffer an immense loss. I consider that this excess caused more injury to letters than all the fires of the barbarians. Cornelius Tacitus is a good witness to this; for although the Emperor Tacitus, his kinsman, had by express edict supplied all the libraries in the world with his works, yet not a

single complete copy escaped the careful search of those who desired to destroy them because of four or five unimportant sentences opposed to our faith.[1] They have also the habit of readily ascribing undeserved praise to all the emperors who favoured us,[2] and of condemning, without exception, all the acts of those who were our adversaries; as can easily be seen in the case of the Emperor Julian, surnamed the Apostate. He was, in truth, a very great and rare man, one whose mind was deeply imbued with the arguments of philosophy, by which he professed to order all his acts; and, truly, there is no kind of virtue of which he did not leave very notable examples. In respect to chastity (of which the course of his life gives very clear testimony), we read of him an instance similar to what is told of Alexander and Scipio: that of a number of very beautiful captives he refused to see a single one, being then in the prime of life;[3] for he was killed by the Parthians when he was but thirty-one years old.[4] As to his justice, he took the trouble to listen himself to the contestants; and while, from curiosity, he informed himself about those who appeared before him of what religion they were, yet the enmity he bore toward ours gave no counterpoise to the scale.[5] He himself made many good laws and curtailed a large part of the subsidies and taxes that his predecessors had levied.[6] We have two good historians who were eye-witnesses of his acts, one of whom, Marcellinus, censures sharply in divers places in his history that edict of the emperor by which he forbade schools to all Christian rhetoricians and grammarians, and prohibited them from teaching; and Marcellinus says that he could wish that act buried in silence.[7] It is probable that, if he[8] had done any thing more severe against us, he[9] would not have forgot-

[1] See Flavius Vopiscus, *Life of the Emperor Tacitus;* Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem.*

[2] That is, the Christians.

[3] See Ammianus Marcellinus, XXIV, 4.27.

[4] See Idem, XXV, 3.23.

[5] See Idem, XXII, 10.1.

[6] See Idem, XXV, 4.20.

[7] See Idem, XXII, 10.7.

[8] Julian.

[9] Marcellinus.

ten it, being well affected to our side. He [1] was vehement against us, it is true, but not, for that, a cruel enemy; for our own people tell this story of him, that, as he was walking one day about the city of Chalcedon, Maris, the bishop of that place, dared boldly to call him a wicked traitor to Christ; and that, affecting, they say, philosophic patience, he did no more than reply to him: "Go, poor wretch, and weep for the loss of your eyes." To which the bishop retorted: "I give thanks to Jesus Christ for having deprived me of sight, so that I see not thy brazen face." [2] This incident certainly does not match well with the cruelties that he is said to have exercised against us. He was, says Eutropius, my other witness, an enemy of Christianity, but without bloodshed.[3]

And to recur to his justice, there is nothing that can be alleged against it save the harsh measures that he employed at the beginning of his reign against those who had belonged to the party of his predecessor, Constantius.[4] As to his sobriety, he lived always the life of a soldier, and ate and drank in times of peace like one making ready and accustoming himself to the austerity of war.[5] Vigilance [6] was so great with him that he divided the night into three or four parts, whereof the shortest was that which he gave to sleep; [7] the rest he employed in personally inspecting the condition of his army and his guides, or in study; [8] for, among his other unusual qualities, he excelled in every sort of

[1] Julian.

[2] See Zonaras, *Chroniques*, etc.; cf. also Sozomenes, *Histoire Ecclésiastique*.

[3] See Eutropius, X, 8. At this point, in 1580, is the following passage, which was omitted altogether in 1588, and was inserted on a later page in 1595. *Aussi ce que plusieurs disent de luy, qu'estant blessé à mort d'un coup de traict, il s'ecria, "Tu as vaincu"; ou, comme disent les autres, "Contente toy, Nazarien," n'est non plus vraysemblable. Car ceux qui estoint presens à sa mort, et qui nous en recitent toutes les particulieres circonstances, les contenances mesmes et les parolles, n'en disent rien; non plus que de je ne sçay quels miracles que d'autres y meslent.*

[4] See Ammianus Marcellinus, XXII, 3.

[5] See Idem, XXV, 4.4.

[6] That is, the power of going without sleep (keeping vigil).

[7] See Idem, XVI, 5.4.

[8] See Idem, XXV, 4.

literature.[1] It is told of Alexander the Great that, when he had gone to bed, for fear that slumber might seduce him from his thoughts and his studies, he had a basin placed beside his bed and held one hand outside, with a copper ball in it, so that, if sleep overcame him and relaxed the grasp of his fingers, the noise of this ball falling into the basin would awaken him.[2] The mind of this man [3] was so bent upon what he desired and, by reason of his singular abstinence, was so little inconvenienced by fumes, that he could very well do without that expedient. As for his military ability, he was admirable in all the qualities of a great captain; and he was, as it were, all his life engaged in waging war, and, for the most part, with us in France against the Germans and Franks. We have scarcely any record of a man who had seen more perils, or who had oftener exposed his person. In his death there was something similar to that of Epaminondas; for he was struck by an arrow, and tried to draw it out, and would have done so but that, the arrow being sharp-edged, he cut himself and weakened his hand.[4] He demanded repeatedly that he should be carried, in this condition, into the thick of the fight, to encourage the soldiers there, who fought very bravely without him, until darkness separated the armies.[5] He owed to philosophy the peculiar contempt in which he held his own life and mortal things.[6] He had a firm belief in the eternity of the soul.

In the matter of religion he was in error throughout; he has been surnamed the Apostate, because he abandoned our form; yet the opinion seems to me more probable, that he had never believed it in his heart, but had pretended to do so, in obedience to the laws, until he held the Empire in his hands. He was, in his own religion, so superstitious, that even those in his day of the same faith made sport of him; and it was said that, if he had won the victory against the Parthians, he would have used up the breed of oxen throughout the world, to fill the measure of his sacrifices; he was besotted, too, with the science of divination, and gave

[1] See Ammianus Marcellinus, XVI, 5.
[2] See *Ibid.*
[3] That is, Julian.
[4] See Ammianus Marcellinus, XXV, 3.
[5] See Idem, XXV, 3.
[6] See Idem, XXV, 5.

authority to every kind of prognostication.[1] He said, among other things, as he was dying, that he was grateful to the gods, and thanked them, because they had not willed to kill him by surprise, — havin glong before warned him of the place and hour of his end, — nor by an easy or cowardly death, better suited to idle and delicate persons; nor by a slow and painful one; and because they had found him worthy to die thus nobly, in the full tide of his victories and the flower of his glory.[2] He had had a vision similar to that of Marcus Brutus, which first threatened him in Gaul,[3] and appeared to him later in Persia, at the time of his death.[4] (*c*) These words, which he is said to have uttered when he felt that he was wounded, "Thou hast conquered, Nazarene," [5] or, as others have it, "Be content, Nazarene," [6] would scarcely have been forgotten, had they been believed, by my witnesses, who, being present in the army, observed even the least actions and words of his last hours — no more than certain other miracles that have been connected with it.[7]

(*a*) And, to come to the heart of my subject, he long cherished, Marcellinus says, paganism in his heart; but, all his army being Christians, he dared not let it be known.[8] Finally, when he found himself strong enough to dare to manifest his mind, he caused the temples of the god to be opened, and endeavoured by every means to promote idolatry. To attain his object, having found in Constantinople the people disunited from the dissentient bishops of the Christian Church,[9] having summoned them before him at the palace, he earnestly admonished them to quiet these civil dissensions, and to follow every one his own religion without hindrance and without fear. This he sedulously solicited, in the hope that this liberty would increase the divisions and contentions of the schism, and would prevent the people from uniting together, and consequently from strengthen-

[1] See Ammianus Marcellinus, XXV, 4. [2] See Idem, XXV, 3.
[3] See Idem, XX, 5. [4] See Idem, XXV, 2.
[5] See Theodoretus, III, 20. [6] See Zonaras, *Chroniques*, etc.
[7] This addition of 1595 is a shortened version of the passage of 1580 quoted above (p. 84, note 3), which is not found in 1588.
[8] See Ammianus Marcellinus, XXI, 2.
[9] *Le peuple decousu avec les pretats de l'Eglise Chrestienne divisez.*

ing themselves against him by their accord and entire agreement; having learned by the cruelty of some Christians that there is no beast in the world so much to be feared by man as man.[1]

These are very nearly his [2] words; wherein this is worthy of reflection, that the Emperor Julian, to kindle the confusion of civil dissension, made use of this same receipt of liberty of conscience which our kings have lately employed to extinguish it. It may be said, on the one hand, that to give the rein to factions to maintain their opinions is to scatter and sow division; is almost to lend a hand in increasing it, there being then neither bar nor coercion by the laws to check and impede its progress. But, on the other hand, it might be said that to give the rein to factions to maintain their opinions is to soften and relax them by facility and ease, and to blunt the spur which is sharpened by rarity, novelty, and difficulty. And therefore I think it is better, for the honour of the piety of our kings, that, not having been able to do what they desire, they have made a show of desiring what they were able to do.

CHAPTER XX

WE HAVE NO EXPERIENCE OF ANY SIMPLE THING [3]

No good, Montaigne declares, is free from ill. This Essay is the development of this thought. And, as physical pains and pleasures are intermingled and interdependent, so are moral good and evil mingled together in the soul. The justest laws have something unjust, and the wisest men are sometimes fools. The two most interesting paragraphs are the personal one of his self-examination, and the following one, full of sound sense on the conduct of affairs, especially public affairs. The one presents Montaigne the Moralist, the other Montaigne the Mayor.

THE imperfection of our condition is the cause that things in their natural simplicity and purity can not be used by us. The elements that we profit by are modified; and the metals also; and gold must be debased by some other substance to adapt it to our service.

[1] See Ammianus Marcellinus, XXII, 5.

[2] Ammianus's.

[3] *Nous ne goustons rien de pur.*

(*c*) Neither the quite pure virtue, which Aristo and Pyrrho and also the Stoics made the object of life, nor the Cyrenaic and Aristippic pleasure, has been available without alloy. (*a*) Of the pleasures and goods that we have, there is none exempt from some mixture of evil and unfitness;

(*b*) medio de fonte leporum
Surgit amari aliquid, quod in ipsis floribus angat.[1]

Nostre extreme volupté a quelque air de gemissement et de plainte. Diriez vous pas qu'elle se meurt d'angoisse? Voire quand nous en forgeons l'image en son excellence, nous la fardons d'epithetes et qualitez maladifves et douloureuses: langueur, mollesse, foiblesse, deffaillance, MORBIDEZZA: grand tesmoignage de leur consanguinité et consubstantialité.

(*c*) Profound joy is more serious than gay; supreme and perfect contentment more sedate than merry. *Ipsa felicitas, se nisi temperat, premit.*[2] Ease eats us up. (*a*) This[3] is said by an ancient Greek verse, to this effect: "The gods sell us all the goods they give us";[4] that is to say, they give us none pure and perfect, and which we do not purchase at the cost of some ill.

(*c*) Toil and pleasure, very dissimilar in nature, are nevertheless united by I know not what natural yoke. Socrates says that some god tried to confuse into one mass pain and pleasure; but, being unable to effect this, he decided to couple them together, at least by the tail.[5] (*b*) Metrodorus said that in sadness there is some mixture of pleasure.[6] I do not know if he meant to say something else;

[1] Out of the very well-spring of delights arises something of bitter that gives pain amid the very flowers. — Lucretius, IV, 1133.

[2] Felicity, unless it moderates itself, is burdensome. — Seneca, *Epistle* 74.18.

[3] Referring back to what he said immediately before the verses of Lucretius, added in 1588.

[4] Attributed to Epicharmus by Xenophon (*Memorabilia*, II, 1.20): *πόνων πωλοῦσιν ἡμῖν πάντα ταγαθὰ θεοί.*

[5] See Plato, *Phædo*. Montaigne refers again to this passage in the last Essay of all. The Latin text that he used (Ficino's) translates the last clause: *in unum saltem eorum apices conjunxisse;* and Jowett: "he fastened their heads together."

[6] M. Villey remarks that Seneca (*Epistle* 99) *consacre un long paragraphe à combattre cette idée, qui le scandalise. Montaigne prend parti*

but for my part I readily conceive that there is intention, acquiescence, and satisfaction in fostering melancholy; I mean, besides ambition, which may also be mingled with it.[1] There is a shade of fastidiousness and delicacy, which shines upon us and flatters us in the very lap of melancholy. Are there not temperaments which make it their sustenance?

Est quædam flere voluptas.[2]

(*c*) And one Attalus, in Seneca, says that the memory of our lost friends is welcome to us like the bitter taste in wine that is very old,[3] —

Minister vetuli, puer, falerni,
Ingere mi calices amariores,[4] —

and like apples sweetly tart. (*b*) Nature reveals this confusion to us; painters hold that the same motions and wrinkles of the face that accompany weeping also accompany laughing. And in truth, before either the one or the other expression is completed, observe the action of the picture: you are in doubt toward which it is proceeding. And the extreme of laughter is mingled with tears. (*c*) *Nullum sine auctoramento malum est.*[5]

When I imagine man beset with desirable advantages (let us assume that all his members were possessed forever with pleasure as great as that of generation at its extremest climax), I feel him give way under the burden of his delight, and I see him wholly incapable of supporting a pleasure so pure, so constant, and so universal. In truth, he slips away when he reaches that point, and involuntarily hastens to escape thence, as from a place of unstable footing, where he fears to sink. (*b*) When I devoutly confess myself to myself, I find that the best goodness I have has some tinge of vice. And I fear that Plato, in his most flourishing [6] virtue

contre le stoicien Senèque, dont la psychologie lui parait trop raide, pour l'épicurien Metrodore, qui lui parait plus réaliste.

[1] Cf. Seneca, *Epistle* 99.

[2] There is a certain pleasure in tears. — Ovid, *Tristia*, IV, 3.27.

[3] See Seneca, *Epistle* 63.5.

[4] Boy, who pourest old Falernian, put the bitterest into my cup. — Catullus, XXVII, 1.

[5] No evil is without compensation. — Seneca, *Epistle* 69.4.

[6] *Plus verte*. In 1580 to 1588: *plus nette*.

(I who am as sincere and loyal an admirer thereof, and of virtues of like stamp, as any man can be), if he had listened closely (and he did listen closely), would have heard a sinister note of human intermixture, but a faint note, and audible to himself only. Man, in every thing and everywhere, is but patchwork and motley.

(*a*) Even the laws of justice can not subsist without some admixture of injustice; and Plato says that they undertake to cut off the heads of Hydra who attempt to remove from the laws all hindrances and unfitnesses.[1] *Omne magnum exemplum habet aliquid ex iniquo, quod contra singulos utilitate publica rependitur*,[2] says Tacitus.

(*b*) It is likewise true that for use in life and the service of public intercourse our minds may be too pure and perspicacious; this penetrating clearness has too much of subtlety and inquisitiveness. We must stupefy and blunt them, to make them more obedient to example and experience; and must becloud and obscure their sight, to bring them into relation with this dark and terrestrial life. Therefore, ordinary and less high-pitched minds[3] are more fit to manage affairs happily. And the lofty and choice doctrines of philosophy are found inept in practice. This keen activity of soul and this nimble and restless volubility disturb our negotiations. Human undertakings must be handled more roughly and superficially, and a good and great part of them be left to the laws of fortune. There is no need to search into affairs so deeply and so craftily. We lose ourselves in the consideration of so many opposing lights and varying shapes; (*c*) *volutantibus res inter se pugnantes obtorpuerant animi*.[4] The ancients say of Simonides that, because his imagination brought before him (touching the question that King Hiero had put to him, to reply to which he had several days

[1] See the *Republic*, book IV. This and the quotation following, Montaigne took from Bodin's *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem.*

[2] In every great punishment there is some mixture of injustice toward individuals, which is counterbalanced by the public utility. — *Annals*, XIV, 44. The Essay ended here in 1580.

[3] *Les esprits communs et moins tendus.*

[4] In considering things contrary in themselves, minds were stupefied. — Livy, XXXII, 20.

for reflection) various keen and ingenious arguments, from doubt which was the most reasonable, he despaired altogether of the truth.[1]

(*b*) He who seeks for and embraces all the circumstances and consequences of action impedes his choice. A medium intelligence [2] is an equally good guide, and suffices for executing matters of great and of little weight. Observe that the best managers of household affairs are those who are least able to tell us how they are so; and that these accomplished talkers oftenest do nothing that is worth while. I know a great discourser and most excellent depicter of every sort of thrift, who has very lamentably let slip through his hands a revenue of a hundred thousand livres. I know another who talks and who advises better than any man he consults with, and there is not in the world a finer apparent exemplar of soul and ability; nevertheless, in action his servants find that he is entirely different — I mean, without taking ill-luck into account.

CHAPTER XXI

AGAINST SLOTHFULNESS

This Essay is not so much against slothfulness in general as "the slothfulness of princes" — "*les rois fainéants*"; and, as we are not princes, and are not inconvenienced nowadays by "*rois fainéants*," the interest of Montaigne's remarks is more historical than personal. They have also in themselves rather *too* historical a flavour. The emperors Vespasian and Hadrian and Julian, Selim I, Bajazet II, Amurath III, Edward III of England and Charles V of France, the kings of Castile and Portugal, and Moley Moluch, King of Fez, were unquestionably important personages, but somehow we are not very much interested about them; at least, by any thing that can be said about them in a few lines.

But one becomes interested when one puts oneself into Montaigne's skin, and sees one's prince weakly occupy himself in "feeble and frivolous occupations." There is little question that there is a reference here to Henri III, who, when he was duc d'Anjou, was remarkable for brilliant valour, but after he became king never appeared in the field. The

[1] See Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.*, I, 22. The question was, what God was.
[2] *Un engin moyen.*

"one prince" of whom Montaigne speaks on the same page — "I know one prince . . ." — is evidently Henri IV.

The thought with which the Essay opens and concludes, that the noblest death is to die "standing," is a favourite one with Montaigne. He spoke of this saying in the Essay, "That to think as a philosopher is to learn to die" (Volume I, page 117). It was unquestionably, to his thinking, "*un beau mot.*"

It is to be observed that this Essay consisted in 1580 and also in 1588 of merely the first and third paragraphs — "*L'empereur Vespasian,*" "*L'empereur Julian.*" All the rest was added in 1595.

THE Emperor Vespasian, being sick with the sickness of which he died, did not relinquish his desire to understand the condition of his empire, and even in his bed constantly despatched many affairs of importance. And when his doctor checked him about this, as being something harmful to his health, "An emperor," he said, "should die standing." [1] A fine saying that, to my thinking, and worthy of a great prince. Hadrian the Emperor made use afterward of the same thought; [2] and it should often be recalled to kings, to make them feel that the great office given them, of command over so many men, is no idle office, and that there is nothing which can so justly disincline a subject to expose himself to trouble and danger in the service of his prince as to see the prince himself meanwhile idling in feeble and frivolous occupations; and so disincline the subject from solicitude for the prince's preservation, as to see him so indifferent to ours.

(*c*) If any one shall choose to maintain that it is better that the prince should conduct his wars by another than by himself, fortune will supply him with examples enough of those princes whose lieutenants have achieved great undertakings, and of those also whose presence has been more harmful than useful. But no worthy and courageous prince could suffer any one to suggest to him such shameful counsels. Under colour of preserving his head, as if he were the statue of a saint, for the good-fortune of his realm, they degrade him from his office, which is military throughout, and

[1] No text has been found which narrates this saying of Vespasian. Montaigne's memory evidently played him false.

[2] See Spartianus, *Life of Ælius Verus*, where Hadrian is reported as saying: *Sanum principem mori debere, non debilem.*

declare him incapable of it. I know one[1] who would much rather be cudgelled than sleep while others were fighting for him, and who never saw without jealousy his own subordinates do something great in his absence. And Selim the First said with reason, it seems to me, that victories which are won without the presence of the master are not complete; much more readily would he have said that that master ought to blush for shame to claim a share in it for his renown, having contributed to it only his words and his thought — and not even those, since in such a business the counsels and commands that carry honour are those only that are given on the spot and in the midst of the battle. No pilot does his work standing still on land. The princes of the Ottoman race, the foremost race in the world in military fortune, have warmly embraced this opinion. And Bajazet the Second, with his son, who swerved from it, spending time on book-learning and other retired occupations, thus dealt many great blows to their empire; and he who now reigns, Amurath the Third, following their example, is very evidently beginning to find himself in the same condition. Was it not the King of England, Edward the Third, who said of our Charles the Fifth, "There was never a king who wore armour less, and yet there was never a king who gave me so much to do"?[2] He had reason to deem it strange, as an effect of chance rather than of discretion. And let those seek some other adherent than myself, who choose to number among warlike and stout-hearted conquerors the kings of Castile and Portugal, because at twelve hundred leagues' distance from their abode of sloth, by the direction of their agents,[3] they have made themselves masters of one and the other Indies; of whom it is not known whether they would even have the spirit to go there to enjoy themselves in person.

(*a*) The Emperor Julian said even more — that a philosopher and a man, to be admired, should not even take his ease;[4] that is to say, should grant to bodily necessities only what can not be denied them, keeping the soul and the body

[1] Probably an allusion to King Henri IV.

[2] See Froissart, I, 123.

[3] That is, their generals.

[4] *Respirer.* See Zonaras, *Life of Julian.*

always employed about good and great and virtuous things. He was ashamed if he was seen to spit or to sweat in public (which is said also of the Lacedæmonian youths and by Xenophon of those of Persia [1]), because he thought that exercise, constant labour, and sobriety should have digested and dried up all those superfluities. What Seneca says will not come amiss in this place: that the ancient Romans kept their youth standing; they taught nothing to their children, he said, which could be learned while seated.[2]

(*c*) It is a noble-hearted desire, to wish even to die usefully and manfully; but the thing lies not so much in our good resolution as in our good-fortune. Thousands have determined to conquer or to die fighting, who have missed both the one and the other; wounds, prisons, baulking that purpose and giving them an enforced life. There are diseases which overthrow even what we desire and what we know. Fortune did not second the ambition of the Roman legions, who bound themselves by an oath to conquer or to die. *Victor, Marce Fabi, revertar ex acie: si fallo, Jovem patrem Gradivumque Martem aliosque iratos invoco deos.*[3] The Portuguese say that, in their conquest of the Indies, they met with soldiers who had condemned themselves, with horrible curses, never to come to terms; [who had vowed] that they would be killed or remain victorious; and in token of this vow they shaved their hair and their beards.[4] To no purpose do we risk our lives and persist in so doing; it seems as if blows avoided those who offer themselves too cheerfully, and they do not willingly fall upon him who offers himself too willingly and spoils their aim. A certain man, failing to achieve the loss of his life at the hands of the enemy after trying every means, in order to carry out his resolution to return with honour or not to return alive, was compelled to give death to himself in the very hottest of the fight. There are other examples; here is one. Philistus,

[1] See the *Cyropædeia*, I, 2.16.

[2] See Seneca, *Epistle* 88.19. The Essay ended here in 1580 and 1588, when it comprised only the first paragraph and this one.

[3] Victor, O Marcus Fabius, I shall return from the fight; if I fail, I will appeal to Father Jupiter and Mars the forth-stepping, and to the other irritated gods. — Livy, II, 45.

[4] See Goulard, *Histoire du Portugal.*

commander of the naval force of the younger Dionysius against the Syracusans, offered battle, which was sharply contested, the forces being equal. At the beginning he had the advantage, from his prowess: but the Syracusans arranging themselves about his galley to invest it, he, having personally performed great feats of arms to extricate himself, and having no longer any hope of succour, deprived himself with his own hand of the life he had in such full measure and unsuccessfully laid open to the hands of the enemy.[1]

Moley Moluch, King of Fez, who has lately won, against Sebastian, King of Portugal, that battle made famous by the death of three kings and by the transmission of that great crown to the King of Castile,[2] chanced to be grievously sick when the Portuguese entered his dominions under arms, and from that time grew ever worse, approaching death and foreseeing it. Never did man make use of his powers more vigorously and bravely. He found himself too weak to undergo the pompous ceremonial of the entry into his camp, which, after their custom, is very magnificent and full of movement, and resigned this honour to his brother. But that was the only office of a leader which he resigned: all the others, necessary and useful, he performed very laboriously and scrupulously, his body lying prostrate, but his mind and his spirit erect and firm even to his last breath and, in a sense, beyond it. He could have worn out his enemies, who had indiscreetly advanced into his territory; and it grievously weighed upon him that, for lack of a little life, and because he had no one to replace him in the conduct of this war and of the affairs of a perturbed realm, he had to seek a bloody and hazardous victory, when he had a different one, pure and spotless, in his hands. However, he miraculously managed during his sickness to use up his enemy, and to draw him far away from his naval force and from the ports he held on the coast of Africa, down to the last day of his life, which he designedly employed and reserved for that great battle. He ranged his forces in a circle,

[1] See Diodorus Siculus, XVI, 6. This long passage, from "Fortune" (28 lines above), is found in 1595, but not in the *Édition Municipale*.

[2] The battle of Alcazar, in 1578.

assailing the Portuguese host on all sides; which circle, curving and contracting, not only blocked them in the conflict, — which was very hot by reason of the valour of that young invading king, since they had to face on all sides, — but also blocked them in flight after the defeat. And, finding all the issues seized and closed, they were compelled to throw themselves back upon themselves, — *coacervanturque non solum cæde, sed etiam fuga*,[1] — and to pile themselves upon one another, thus providing the victors with a very murderous and very complete victory. Dying as he was, he had himself borne hurriedly hither and thither, wherever need called him; and passing along the line, exhorted his officers and soldiers, one troop after another. But, a corner of his array allowing itself to be driven in, he could not be prevented from mounting his horse, sword in hand. He strove to enter into the mellay, those about him holding him back, some by the bridle, some by his robe and by his stirrups. This effort completely overwhelmed the little life he had left. They laid him back on his bed. Reviving suddenly from this swoon, to warn them that they should say nothing of his death, so that the news might not cause discouragement to his troops, which was the most essential command that he had then to give, all other power failing him, he held his finger to his closed lips, — the usual sign to enjoin silence, — and so expired. Who ever lived so long and so deeply in death? Who ever died so erectly?[2]

The extreme degree of treating death courageously, and the most natural, is to view it, not only without amazement, but without concern, freely continuing the tenor of life, even within death.[3] Like Cato, who occupied himself in study and sleep whilst he had present in his head and in his heart a violent and bloody death, and held it in his hand.

[1] They are heaped up, not only by slaughter, but also by flight. — Livy, II, 4.7.

[2] See Jeronimo de Franchi Conestaggio, *Dell'unione del regno di Portogallo alla corona di Castiglia.*

[3] Cf. Book I, chap. 20 (Vol. I, pp. 117, 118).

CHAPTER XXII

OF POSTING

THESE two pages about riding post — after the first two sentences they are but a string of facts — show what an admirable collaborator for an encyclopædia Montaigne would have been.

The first sentence is one of those that make the unfading strokes in the portrait of him created by the Essays. The second sentence suggests the picture of the moment of conception of this Essay, when, laying down the volume of Xenophon, he let his thoughts dwell, as he walked about his circular library, on what he had been reading.

I HAVE not been amongst the least able in this exercise, which is adapted to men of my stature, thick set and short; but I am relinquishing the occasions for the use of it; [1] it tries us too much to continue long at it. (*a*) I was reading just now that King Cyrus, to obtain more readily news from all parts of his empire, which was of very great extent, made enquiry how far a horse could travel in a day without stopping, and at that distance from one another he placed men whose duty it was to have horses ready to supply those who were coming to him.[2] (*c*) And some say that this swiftness of travel reaches that of the flight of cranes.

(*a*) Cæsar says that Lucius Vibulus Rufus, being in haste to carry intelligence to Pompeius, travelled day and night, changing horses for greater speed.[3] And he himself,[4] according to Suetonius, made a hundred miles a day in a hired coach. But he was a reckless rider; for when rivers stopped his way, he crossed them by swimming, (*c*) and never turned from the straight road to seek a bridge or a ford. (*a*) Tiberius Nero, going to see his brother Drusus, who was ill in Germany, made two hundred miles in twenty-four hours, having three coaches.[5]

[1] *Mais j'en quitte le mestier.* These four lines first appeared in the edition of 1588.

[2] See Xenophon, *Cyropædeia*, VIII, 6.9.

[3] *De Bello Civili*, III, 2.

[4] Cæsar. See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*

[5] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 20.

(*c*) In the war of the Romans against King Antiochus, T. Sempronius Gracchus, says Livy, *per dispositos equos prope incredibili celeritate ab Amphissa tertio die Pellam pervenit.*[1] And it appears, upon observing the place, that they were established posts, not newly arranged for this journey. (*b*) The invention of Cecinna for sending news to his household was much more speedy: he carried swallows with him, and when he wished to send news of himself, he released them, to go back to their nests, staining them with a spot of colour proper to signify what he desired, as he had concerted with his people.[2] In the theatre at Rome, heads of families carried pigeons in their bosoms, to which they tied letters when they wished to give some order to their people at home; and they were trained to bring back the reply. D. Brutus used them when besieged at Mutina;[3] and others elsewhere. In Peru the couriers rode on men, who took them on their shoulders, in litters,[4] with such skill that, on the run, the first bearers transferred their burden to the next, without any pause.[5] (*c*) I understand that the Valachi, couriers of the Great Turk, make extreme speed, because it is permitted to them to take the steed of the first traveller they meet on the road, giving to him their jaded horse; and that, to save themselves from weariness, they gird themselves about the middle very tightly with a broad band,[6] as a good many others do. I have found no special locality for this custom.[7]

[1] With relays of horses, by incredible speed, arrived on the third day at Pellæ, from Amphissa. — Livy, XXXVII, 7.

[2] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, X, 24. This and the next two examples Montaigne took from Justus Lipsius, *Saturnalium Sermonum Libri*, II, 26.

[3] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, X, 37.

[4] *A tout de portoires.*

[5] See Gomara, *Histoire Générale des Indes*, V, 7.

[6] See Chalcondylas, XIII, 14.

[7] The last sentence is found in 1595, but is not in the *Édition Municipale.*

CHAPTER XXIII

OF BAD MEANS EMPLOYED FOR A GOOD END

The opening of this Essay is not very interesting from any point of view. It treats of the resemblance of states and individuals in plethoric conditions; but in the course of it we have one of the personal expressions about the public affairs of the day which are always of interest. The consideration of the gain that may come from the evil of war leads to general examples of the use of bad means for a good end — uninteresting again.

THERE is a wonderful relation and correspondency in the universal government of the works of nature, which shows clearly that it is neither fortuitous nor conducted by various masters. The diseases and conditions of our bodies are to be seen in states and governments as well; kingdoms and republics are born, flourish, and wither with age, as we do. We are subject to a useless and harmful plethora of humours; whether of benign humours (for even that the doctors are afraid of; and because there is nothing stable in us, they say that perfect health, too active and vigorous, we must enfeeble and diminish by artificial means, for fear lest our nature, being unable to settle down in any one place, and no longer having where to ascend to, to better itself, may retrogress in confusion and too suddenly; to this end they prescribe for athletes purges and bleedings, to withdraw from them this superabundance of health); or whether a plethora of malign humours, which is the common cause of sickness.

From such a plethora states are often seen to be suffering, and they are wont to resort to diverse methods of purging. Sometimes they expel a great multitude of families to relieve the country of them, who go to seek elsewhere a place to establish themselves at the expense of others. In this way our ancient Franks, setting out from the depths of Germany, came to seize upon Gaul and drove out its original inhabitants; thus was set in motion that ceaseless tide of men which flowed into Italy under Brennus and others; thus the Goths and the Vandals, as also the peoples who now possess

Greece, abandoned their native countries, to settle elsewhere, where there was more room; and there are hardly two or three corners of the world which have not felt the effects of a like movement. The Romans by this means built up their colonies; for, perceiving that their city was becoming over-populous, they relieved it of the least necessary people, and sent these to occupy and cultivate the lands they had conquered. Sometimes, too, they purposely fostered wars with some of their enemies, not only to keep their men in action, for fear that idleness, the mother of corruption, should bring upon them some worse evils, —

> (*b*) Et patimur longæ pacis mala; sævior armis,
> Luxuria incumbit,[1] —

(*a*) but also to serve as blood-letting for their commonwealth, and to cool off a little the too vehement heat of their youth; to prune and thin out the branching of the trunk too lusty in its growth; [2] to this end they formerly made use of the war against the Carthaginians.

At the time of the treaty of Brétigny, Edward the Third, King of England, did not choose to include in the general peace that he made with our king the controversy about the duchy of Bretagne, in order that he might have a place where he could dispose of his troops, and that the multitude of English whom he had employed in his affairs on this side of the Channel [3] might not be thrown back into England. The same thing was one of the reasons why our King Philippe consented to send Jean, his son, to the war overseas, in order that he might carry with him a great number of young hot-bloods, who were in his troop of horse.[4]

There are many in these days who reason in like manner, desiring that this heat of emotion which exists among us

[1] We suffer the evils of a long peace; luxury, more baleful than arms, oppresses us. — Juvenal, VI, 291.

[2] *Foisonnant en trop de gaillardise.*

[3] *Aus affaires de deça.* See Froissart, I, 213.

[4] *En sa gendarmerie.* No source for this statement has ever been found. Philip Augustus sent his son on an expedition into England (1215); but the son's name was Louis, not Jean, and it is nowhere stated that the purpose of the expedition was to get rid of the troops who were overrunning France.

might be directed to some neighbouring war; for fear that these peccant humours which prevail in our body politic at the present moment, if they are not drawn off elsewhere, will keep our fever still at its height, and finally bring about our total ruin. And, truly, a foreign war is a much milder evil than civil war; but I do not think that God would favour so unjust an enterprise as insulting and quarrelling with another nation for our profit.

(*b*) Nil mihi tam valde placeat, Rhamnusia virgo,
Quod temere invitis suscipiatur heris.[1]

(*a*) Nevertheless, the weakness of our condition often urges us to this necessity of making use of evil means for a good end. Lycurgus, the most virtuous and perfect legislator that ever lived, imagined this very unjust method of teaching his people temperance — to make the Helots, who were their slaves, drunk by force, to the end that, seeing them thus lost and buried in wine, the Spartans would hold in horror the excess of that vice.[2] Those were still more to blame who, of old, gave leave for criminals, to whatever sort of death they were condemned, to be torn apart alive by physicians, in order to see the natural condition of our internal organs, and to establish thereby greater certainty in the art of medicine; for, if we must go astray, it is more excusable to do it in the service of the health of the soul than of that of the body; as the Romans trained the people to valour and contempt of danger and death by those furious spectacles of gladiators and fencers pledged to deadly combat,[3] who fought and gashed and killed one another in their presence.

(*b*) Quid vesani aliud sibi vult ars impia ludi,
Quid mortes juvenum, quid sanguine pasta voluptas?[4]

[1] O virgin of Rhamnusia, may nothing please me excessively which must be taken from an unwilling possessor. — Catullus, LXVIII, 77.

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*.

[3] *Escrimeurs à outrance*.

[4] What other end has the impious art of the gladiator, the slaughter of young men, the pleasure that is fed on bloodshed? — Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, II, 672.

And this custom continued to the time of the Emperor Theodosius:[1]

> Arripe dilatam tua, dux, in tempora famam,
> Quodque patris superest, successor laudis habeto.
> Nullus in urbe cadat cujus sit pœna voluptas.
> Jam solis contenta feris infamis arena,
> Nulla cruentatis homicidia ludat in armis.[2]

(*a*) It was in very truth an admirable example, and of very great profit for the education of the people, to see every day a hundred, two hundred, or a thousand pairs of men, armed against each other, hack each other to pieces in their presence, with such extreme firmness of courage that they were never known to utter a word of weakness or lamentation, never to turn their backs, or even to make a cowardly motion to avoid their opponent's blow; but, rather, to expose their neck to the sword and present themselves to the stroke. There were not a few instances when one of them, hurt to the death and with many wounds, sent to ask the people if they were pleased with his performance, before he lay down to breathe his last on the spot. It was not needful that they should merely fight and die bravely, but cheerfully, too; so that they were hooted and cursed if they were seen to hesitate to welcome death. (*b*) Even girls egged them on;

> consurgit ad ictus;
> Et quoties victor ferrum jugulo inserit, illa
> Delitias ait esse suas, pectusque jacentis
> Virgo modesta jubet converso pollice rumpi.[3]

[1] This whole passage, to the end of the Essay, the quotations included, is taken from Justus Lipsius, *Saturnalium Sermonum Libri*, books I and II.

[2] Take possession, O prince, of the renown reserved for this age, and with the heritage of your father be successor to his praise. Let no man in the city fall in combat, whose suffering gives pleasure. Henceforth let the infamous arena be content with beasts only, and let not homicide disport itself with bloody arms. — Prudentius, *Contra Symmachum*, II, 643.

[3] She springs from her seat at each blow; and every time the victor drives his steel into his opponent's throat, she proclaims her delight; and she, a tender maiden, by her turned-down thumb bids the prostrate breast be pierced. — *Ibid.*, II, 617.

(*a*) The early Romans employed criminals in this proceeding; but later they employed innocent slaves, and also free men, who sold themselves to that end; (*b*) even Roman senators and knights, and women as well.

Nunc caput in mortem vendunt, et funus arenæ,
Atque hostem sibi quisque parat, cum bella quiescunt.[1]

Hos inter fremitus novosque lusus,
Stat sexus rudis insciusque ferri,
Et pugnas capit improbus viriles.[2]

(*a*) Which I should find very strange and incredible, were we not accustomed to see every day in our wars thousands of men from other lands pledging for money their blood and their lives, in broils in which they have no interest.

CHAPTER XXIV

OF THE ROMAN GRANDEUR

I FANCY that this Essay was built up round the story about C. Popilius, which comes near the middle. Perhaps Montaigne laid down his "Tite-Live," open at this page, to take up his pen, or to dictate to his secretary as he walked about his library. These desultory pages are like five minutes' talk with Montaigne — or from him — on one of the subjects most familiar to his thought. All that concerned Rome and the Romans was peculiarly interesting to him. He was more at home with them than with his own countrymen.

I DESIRE to say just a word on this limitless subject, to show the ignorance of those who compare the paltry grandeurs of the present time with those of Rome. In the seventh book of Cicero's *Familiar Epistles* (and let the grammarians do away with that epithet, "familiar," if they choose, for in truth it is not very appropriate; and those who for "familiar" have substituted *ad familiares* can derive some argument on their side from what Suetonius

[1] Now they sell their lives to death, and their corpses lie in the arena; and each one is himself his own enemy, when wars have ceased. — Manilius, *Astronomica*, IV, 225.

[2] Amid this din and these new games stands the tender sex, unused to arms, and audaciously joins in men's fights. — Statius, *Sylvæ*, I, 6.51.

says in the *Life of Cæsar*, that there was a volume of letters of his *ad familiares*), there is one, addressed to Cæsar, who was then in Gaul, in which Cicero quotes these words, which were at the end of a letter Cæsar had written him: "As for Marcus Furius, whom you have recommended to me, I will make him King of Gaul; and if you would have me advance any other of your friends, send them to me." [1] It was not the first time that a simple Roman citizen, as Cæsar then was, disposed of a kingdom, for he really deprived King Deiotarus of his, to give it to a gentleman of the city of Pergamos named Mithridates.[2] And they who have written his life record the sale by him of several other kingdoms; and Suetonius says that he extorted at one stroke from King Ptolemy three million six hundred thousand crowns,[3] which was much the same as selling his own: —

(*b*) Tot Galatæ, tot Pontus eat, tot Lydia nummis.[4]

Marcus Antonius said that the grandeur of the Roman people was shown not so much by what they took as by what they gave.[5] (*c*) Yet a century and more before Antonius [6] it took possession of one [7] among others by such an extraordinary exercise of authority, that in all its history I know of no testimony which bears higher the fame of its influence. Antiochus possessed all Egypt, and was about to conquer Cyprus and other appendages of that empire. In the course of his victories, Caius Popilius came to him on the part of the Senate, and on arriving refused to take him by the hand until he had first read the letters that he brought to him. The king having read them and said that he would reflect about them, Popilius drew with his staff a line around the place where he [8] was, saying: "Before you step from out this circle, give me an answer which I

[1] See Cicero, *Epistulæ ad Familiares*, VII, 5.2.

[2] See Idem, *De Div.*, II, 37.

[3] Suetonius says, "*Prope sex millier talentorum.*" Montaigne found the equivalent in French money in a note to his edition of Suetonius.

[4] Such a sum for Galatia; for so much, Pontus; for so much, Lydia. — Claudian, *In Eutropium*, I, 203.

[5] See Plutarch, *Life of Antony*.

[6] It was from 130 to 140 years. "It" = Rome.

[7] That is, of one kingdom.

[8] The king.

can carry back to the Senate." Antiochus, amazed by the harshness of so peremptory a command, after a short meditation said: "I will do what the Senate commands me." Thereupon Popilius saluted him as a friend of the Roman people.[1] To renounce so great a monarchy and a career of such fortunate prosperity because of the impression made by three lines of writing! He had reason, in truth, to send to the Senate, as he afterward did, to say by his ambassadors that he had received its decree with as much respect as if it had come from the immortal gods.

(*b*) All the kingdoms that Augustus won by force of arms he restored to those who had lost them, or presented them to strangers. (*a*) And in this connection Tacitus, speaking of the English King Cogidunus, makes us perceive this infinite power by a marvellous touch. "The Romans," he says, "were accustomed from the most ancient times to leave the kings whom they had overcome in possession of their kingdom, under their authority,[2] so that they might have kings themselves, instruments of servitude; *ut haberet instrumenta servitutis et reges*.[3] (*c*) It is probable that Solyman, whom we have seen exercise liberality with the kingdom of Hungary and other states, paid more heed to this consideration than to that which he was wont to allege: that he was surfeited and overburdened with so many monarchies and so much power, which his valour, or that of his ancestors, had won for him.[4]

[1] See Livy, XLV, 12, 13.
[2] That is, the authority of Rome.
[3] Tacitus, *Agricola*, XIV. Translated by Montaigne before quoting.
[4] The last clause (1595) is not found in the *Édition Municipale*.

CHAPTER XXV

OF NOT COUNTERFEITING SICKNESS

I THINK that it was some hot summer, when he could not take the physical exercise which he says was always necessary to stir his brain, that Montaigne, sitting in his cool tower, wrote the dozen short chapters that precede and follow and include this. They may have served *pour passer le temps* for himself, but they do not afford the reader any great pleasure. They have little life in them. All the entertainment in them is borrowed, and *réchauffé* stories are a kind of diet which one soon wearies of — or which the modern reader wearies of; one must not forget that in Montaigne's day *learning* was as much prized as originality.

On one of the first pages there is another little touch given to his own portrait.

THERE is an epigram in Martial, which is one of the good ones (for there are all kinds in him), in which he tells amusingly the story of Cœlius, who, to avoid paying court to certain great men at Rome, — being present at their rising, accompanying them, and waiting on them,— pretended to have gout, and, to make his excuse more plausible, had his legs anointed and wrapped up, and in every respect imitated the bearing and appearance of a gouty man; at last fortune gave him the pleasure of being one really: —

> Tantum cura potest et ars doloris,
> Desiit fingere Cœlius podagram.[1]

I have read somewhere in Appian, (*c*) it seems to me, (*a*) a similar tale of one who, seeking to evade the proscriptions of the Triumvirs of Rome, by keeping himself hidden and disguised, in order to avoid recognition by those who were pursuing him, added the invention of pretending to be one-eyed; when he had recovered a little more liberty, and when he would have left off the plaster that he had for a long time worn over his eye, he found that his sight had been actually lost behind that mask.[2] It is possible that the action of the

[1] So much can painstaking effect, and the art of suffering; Cœlius no longer needs to feign gout. — Martial, VII, 39.8.

[2] See Appian, IV, 6.41.

eye had been impaired by having been so long without exercise, and that the visual power had all been transferred to the other eye; for we feel distinctly that the eye that we cover passes over to its fellow something of its force, in such wise that this other grows larger and dilates; just as disuse, together with the heat of the swathings and medicaments, might very well have invited some podagric humour to Martial's gouty man. Reading in Froissart of the vow of a party of young English gentlemen to keep a band over the left eye until they had entered France and performed some feat of arms against us, I have often been amused by the thought that it might have happened to them as to that other, and that they might all have found themselves one-eyed on meeting again their mistresses, for whom they had undertaken the enterprise. Mothers do well to reprove their children when they imitate one-eyed people, or lameness, or squinting, or other bodily defects; for besides that the body, then so soft, may thus acquire an ill bent, it seems, I know not how, that fortune delights in taking us at our word; and I have heard of several examples of persons who, having intended only to pretend to be sick, have become so. (*c*) I have always been in the habit of having a stick or a staff in my hand, both on horseback and on foot, and have even sought elegance in the use of it and in leaning upon it [1] in an artificial manner. Many have warned me that fortune would some day turn this foppery into necessity. I rely upon this, that I should be the first gouty one of my family.

(*a*) But let us spin out this chapter, and patch on another anecdote about blindness. Pliny tells of a man who, dreaming that he was blind, found himself so on the morrow, without any preceding sickness.[2] The power of the imagination may well assist herein, as I have said elsewhere;[3] and it would seem that Pliny is of this opinion; but it is more probable that the inward agitations which the body perceived, of which the doctors may find the cause if they will, were the occasion of the dream.

Let us add yet another anecdote germane to this subject, which Seneca relates in one of his letters. "You know," he

[1] *De m'en sejourner.* [2] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 50.
[3] In Book I, chap. 21 (Vol. I, pp.129ff.).

says, writing to Lucilius, "that Harpaste, my wife's fool, has lived in my family as an hereditary burden; for by nature I am averse to these monsters, and if I feel inclined to laugh at a fool, I need not seek very far — I laugh at myself. This fool has suddenly lost her sight. I tell you a strange, but a true thing — she does not perceive that she is blind, and eagerly implores her guardian to take her away; for she says that my house is dark. This that we laugh at in her, I beg you to believe happens to every one of us: no man recognises that he is eager to be better off, no man that he desires worldly things.[1] But the blind ask for a guide, we go astray by ourselves. I am not ambitious, we say, but in Rome one can not live otherwise; I am not extravagant, but the city demands a great expenditure; it is not my fault if I am choleric, if I have not yet established any settled manner of life — it is the fault of youth. Let us not seek outside of ourselves; what is ill with us is in us, is rooted in our bowels. And the very fact that we do not perceive that we are sick makes our cure more difficult. If we do not begin in good season to doctor ourselves, when shall we have attended to so many wounds and so many diseases? Yet we have a very agreeable medicine — philosophy; from other medicines we do not receive pleasure until after the cure; this one pleases and cures at the same time." [2] This is what Seneca says, which has led me away from my subject; but there is profit in change.

[1] *Nul ne connoit estre avare, nul convoiteux.* Seneca's words are: *Nemo se avarum esse intelligit, nemo cupidum.*

[2] See Seneca, *Epistle* 50.2.

CHAPTER XXVI

OF THUMBS

Two pages of historical and etymological facts about thumbs; their bare simplicity is their only merit. In the hands of a modern magazine writer they could be padded with rhetoric to make twenty pages of worthless entertainment. And in a modern scientific journal they would become learned praises of the thumb as an element of civilisation. With only the rudimentary thumb of the anthropoid ape, man would have remained a harmless monkey.

Sir John Lubbock reports that the Australian and African savages treat their conquered enemies in the same manner that the Athenians were wont to do.

TACITUS reports that, with certain barbarian kings, their manner of making a binding obligation was to clasp their right hands tightly together and intertwist their thumbs; and when, by dint of squeezing them, the blood came to the tip, they pricked them lightly, and then each sucked the other's.[1] Physicians say that the thumb is the master-finger of the hand, and that the word *pouce* is derived from the Latin *pollere*, which signifies, to surpass others in excellence.[2] The Greeks call it ἀντίχειρ, as who should say, another hand. And it seems that the Latins, too, sometimes use it in this sense of the whole hand: —

> Sed nec vocibus excitata blandis,
> Molli pollice nec rogata, surgit.[3]

In Rome it was a sign of favour to put the thumbs together and turn them down, —

> Fautor utroque tuum laudabit pollice ludum,[4] —

[1] This fact is reported by Tacitus (*Annals*, XII, 47), but M. Villey has made it clear that Montaigne took it from Beroald's Commentary on Suetonius's *Life of Augustus*, XXIV, where he found also the substance of the next paragraph.

[2] The last clause, from "pollere" (1580 to 1588), was omitted in 1595. See Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, VII, 13.

[3] Martial, XII, 97.8.

[4] Your companion will applaud your sport with both thumbs. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 18.66.

and of disfavour to raise them and turn them outward, —

converso pollice vulgi
Quemlibet occidunt populariter.[1]

The Romans released from military service those who were wounded in the thumb, because they were no longer able to grasp their weapons firmly enough. Augustus confiscated the property of a Roman knight who had treacherously cut off the thumbs of his young sons, to excuse them from going into the army;[2] and before that, the Senate, at the time of the Italian war, had condemned Caius Vatienus to life-long imprisonment and had confiscated all his property, for having intentionally cut off the thumb of his left hand, to exempt himself from that expedition.[3] Some one, who it was I do not recall, having won a naval battle, had the thumbs of his vanquished foes cut off, to deprive them of the means of fighting and of handling the oars.[4] (*c*) The Athenians cut off the thumbs of the Æginetans, to take away their superiority in the art of seamanship.[5] (*b*) In Lacedæmon the schoolmaster punished the children by biting their thumbs.[6]

[1] The populace, with thumbs reversed, kill indiscriminately. — Juvenal, III, 36.

[2] See Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*, XXIV, and Beroald's Commentary.

[3] See Valerius Maximus, VI, 3.3. Taken by Montaigne from Beroald's Commentary on Suetonius.

[4] Perhaps a mistaken reminiscence of Philocles, in Plutarch, *Life of Lysander*.

[5] See Cicero, *De Off.*, III, 11; Valerius Maximus, IX, 2, *ext.* 8.

[6] See Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*.

CHAPTER XXVII

COWARDICE THE MOTHER OF CRUELTY

A LONG Essay of Montaigne's is sure to be interesting; one may almost say, the longer, the more interesting. It always contains not merely *actually* more, but *in proportion* more of Montaigne's thought; and, I believe, the thought, the more there is of it, always, invariably, becomes richer in quality, deeper as well as wider. The short and long Essays may be compared to shrubs and trees; the shrubby ones often are covered with flowers and fruitage of erudition, but the tree-like ones do not need such adornments.

This chapter is of medium length and medium interest. The somewhat commonplace thesis (perhaps not so commonplace before his day as in later times) receives vitality from the note of *personal observation:* "I have seen extremely cruel men who —." Few of Montaigne's present readers have seen many cruel men. The note of personal observation passes into the note of personal meditation on the conditions of his time — always most interesting from his pen.

The pages about Publius Rutilius, the Emperor Maurice, and Herodicus are a little too antique to touch us much; but following them is an important passage for the estimation of the character of Montaigne's opinions; and it is one often referred to: "All [punishment or revenge] that goes beyond simple death seems to me pure cruelty." This same expression is used by him in the other Essay on cruelty, and it is one of the points for which he was reprimanded at Rome by the "Maestro del sacro palasso."

I HAVE often heard it said that cowardice is the mother of cruelty. (*b*) And I have by experience discovered that the exasperation and fierceness of a malevolent and inhuman heart is commonly accompanied by feminine sensitiveness. I have seen some of the most cruel men prone to weep easily and for trivial reasons. Alexander, tyrant of Pheres, could not bear to listen to tragedies at the theatre, for fear lest his subjects should see him mourn over the misfortune of Hecuba and Andromache — him who, without pity, caused so many persons to be cruelly put to death every day.[1] Can it be weakness of spirit that makes them thus easily moved to every kind of extreme?

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Pelopidas*.

(*a*) True valour (whose intention is to exert itself only against resistance, —

Nec nisi bellantis gaudet cervice juvenci [1]) —

is stayed by seeing the foe at its mercy. But pusillanimity, assuming that she also is at the feast, not having been able to enter into the first action, takes for her share the second — of massacre and bloodshed. The murders in victories are ordinarily committed by the hangers-on of the army and by those in charge of the baggage-trains; and the reason that there are seen so many acts of unheard-of cruelty in domestic wars is that the rascally rabble is made ready for fight and emboldened [2] by being in blood to the elbows and by mangling a body at its feet, having no comprehension of another sort of valour, —

(*b*) Et lupus et turpes instant morientibus ursi,
Et quæcunque minor nobilitate fera est,[3] —

(*a*) like cowardly dogs, which, in the house, tear with their teeth the skins of wild beasts that they dared not attack in the fields.[4] What is it that, in these days, makes our quarrels ever deadly; and that, whereas our fathers had some stages in revenge, we now begin with the extreme degree, and at the outset speak of nothing but killing? What is this, if it is not cowardice? Every one knows that there is more defiance and scorn in whipping an enemy than in putting an end to him, and in making him kiss the dust than in killing him. Furthermore, that the thirst for vengeance is thus better assuaged and satisfied, for it aims only at making itself felt. This is the reason that we do not attack a beast or a stone when it hurts us, because they are incapable of feeling our revenge. And to kill a man is to put him out of reach of our reprisal. (*b*) And just as Bias exclaimed to a wicked man: "I know that sooner or later you will be punished for this, but I fear that I shall not see it"; and pitied the Orchomen-

[1] Nor enjoys cutting the throat of a young bull unless it resists. — Claudian, *Epistula ad Hadrianum*, 30.

[2] *S'aguerrit et se gendarme.*

[3] And the wolf and the hateful bear and all the less noble beasts crowd about the dying. — Ovid, *Tristia*, III, 5.35.

[4] See Plutarch, *Of Hearing*.

ians because the punishment of Lyciscus for his treachery to them came when there was no one left of those who had been affected by it, and who would be touched by the satisfaction of that punishment,[1] so is vengeance to be pitied when he against whom it is directed is without the means of feeling it; for, as the avenger, to derive pleasure from it, desires to see it, so he upon whom the revenge is practised must see it also, to receive from it suffering and repentance. (*a*) He shall repent it, we say. And when we give him a pistol-shot in the head, do we think he repents? On the contrary, if we look closely, we shall find that he taunts us as he falls; he is not even ungrateful to us; he is very far from penitence. (*c*) And we do him the kindest of all the offices of life, which is to make him die quickly and painlessly. (*a*) We have to hide ourselves, and go away, and fly from the officers of the law who pursue us — and he is at rest. To kill him is desirable, to avoid future wrongs, but not to avenge that which is already done; (*c*) it is an act of fear rather than of bravery, of precaution rather than of courage, of defence rather than of attack. (*a*) It is evident that we thereby abandon both the true object of vengeance and the care of our reputation; we fear lest, if he remain in life, he may attack us again in like manner. (*c*) It is not as against him, it is as for yourself, that you rid yourself of him.

In the kingdom of Narsingue this expedient would not be needed by us. There, not only soldiers, but workmen as well, settle their disputes with the sword. The king never denies the field to him who wishes to fight; and when they are persons of rank, he is present and bestows on the victor a chain of gold. But, to win that from him, the first man who desires can fight with him who wears it, who, by having rid himself of one combat, has many on his hands.[2]

(*a*) If we thought to be always masters of our foe by force, and to domineer over him at our pleasure, we should be very sorry that he should escape us, as he does by dying: we wish to conquer, but more safely than honourably; (*c*) and we seek the result rather than renown in our quar-

[1] See Plutarch, *On the delays of divine justice.*
[2] See Goulard, *Histoire du Portugal*, IV, 12.

rels. Asinius Pollio, though an honourable man, exhibited a like error; who, having written invectives against Plancus, waited until he was dead to publish them.[1] It was insulting a blind man by gesture, and railing at a deaf man,[2] and wounding a senseless man rather than run the risk of his being sensible of it. So they said regarding him, that it was for ghosts only to contend with the dead. He who waits to see the author depart this life whose writings he desires to dispute, what does he say except that he is weak and contentious? Aristotle was told that some one had spoken ill of him; "Let him do more," he said; "let him whip me, provided I am not there." [3]

(*a*) Our fathers contented themselves with avenging an insult by giving the lie, giving the lie by a blow, and so on in order. They were valiant enough not to fear their enemy living and outraged. We tremble with fright so long as we see him on his feet. And, to prove that this is so, is it not our fine practice to-day, to pursue to the death, equally, him whom we have wronged and him who has wronged us? (*b*) It is also a species of cowardice that has introduced into our single combats the custom of being attended by seconds, thirds, and fourths. In old days they were duels; now they are encounters and battles. The loneliness frightened those who first conceived this plan. (*c*) *Cum in se cuique minimum fiduciæ esset.*[4] (*b*) For, naturally, any companionship whatever brings cheer and relief in danger. In old days they made use of third persons to see that there was no confusion or treachery, (*c*) and to testify to the result of the combat; (*b*) but since we have adopted this fashion that they themselves shall take part in it, whoever is invited can not honourably hold himself as a spectator of it, for fear lest this be ascribed to lack of good-will or of courage. Besides the injustice and baseness of such action, — enlisting for the protection of your honour other valour and strength than your own, — I find there is a disadvantage for an able man,

[1] See Pliny, *Natural History*, Preface. Montaigne undoubtedly took it from Vivès's Commentary on St. Augustine, *De Civ. Dei*, V, 27.

[2] *C'estoit faire la figue à un aveugle et dire des pouilles à un sourd.*

[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Aristotle.*

[4] For each man had little confidence in himself. — Source unknown.

who completely trusts himself, to involve his fortune with that of a second. Every one incurs sufficient risk for himself, without incurring it also for another, and has enough to do to safeguard himself in his own valour, for the defence of his life, without entrusting so precious a thing to other hands. For, unless there has been an express agreement to the contrary, it is a joint affair between the four. If your second is down, you have two of them on your hands, with good reason. And if you say that this is outrageous, so indeed it is, even as it is outrageous to attack, well armed, a man who has only a broken sword, or, unhurt, a man who is already badly wounded. But if these are advantages which you have won in fighting, you may make use of them without reproach. Disparity and inequality are weighed and considered only in regard to the conditions in which the fray begins; afterward, accept what fortune gives you. And if you alone have three on your hands, your two companions having been killed, no more wrong is done you than I, with like advantage, should do, in war, by giving a sword-thrust to an enemy whom I saw grappling one of our men. The nature of this fellowship is such that, when there is troop against troop (as when our duc d'Orléans challenged Henry, King of England, a hundred against a hundred;[1] [*c*] three hundred against a like number, as the Argives against the Lacedæmonians;[2] three against three, as the Horatii against the Curiatii),[3] (*b*) the many on either side are considered as but a single man. Wherever is companionship, there the risk is undefined and involved.

I have a family interest in this subject, for my brother, the sieur de Matecolom, was requested, in Rome, to second a gentleman whom he scarcely knew, who was on his defence, having been challenged by another. In this combat he found himself by chance opposed to one who was more near to him and more known to him (I would that some one would justify to me these laws of honour, which so often run counter to and disquiet those of reason); having disposed of his man, seeing the two principals in the affair still on their feet and unhurt, he went to the relief of his companion.

[1] See Monstrelet, I, 9.
[2] See Herodotus, I, 82.
[3] See Livy, I, 24.

What less could he do? Should he have stood still and looked on at the defeat — if fate had so willed — of him for whose defence he had come thither? What he had done up to that time was of no service in the matter: the brawl was undecided. The courtesy which you can, and certainly ought to, show your enemy when you have brought him to an ill condition and to some great disadvantage, I see not how you can show when another's interest is concerned, when you are only a follower, when the dispute is not yours. He [1] could be neither fair nor courteous at the risk of him to whom he had lent himself. So he was released from Italian prisons by a very prompt and public representation from our king.

Heedless nation! We are not content with making our vices and follies known to the world by report: we go among foreign nations to cause them to be seen in life. Put three Frenchmen in the Libyan deserts — they will not be together a month without provoking and irritating one another; you would say that this peregrination is a scheme arranged to give to foreigners the pleasure of witnessing our tragedies; and, in most cases, to those who rejoice in our ills and who make sport of them. We go to Italy to learn to fence, (*c*) and practise it at the expense of our lives before we know how. (*b*) Yet it is needful, according to the rules for instruction, to put theory before practice; we betray our lack of skill: [2]

> Primitiæ juvenum miseræ, bellique futuri
> Dura rudimenta.[3]

I well know that it is an art (*c*) useful for its purpose (in the duel between the two princes, cousins-german, in Spain, the elder, Livy says, by skill in arms and by craft easily overcame the paralysed powers of the younger [4]), and, as I have learned by experience, one (*b*) the knowledge of which sometimes strengthens the heart beyond its natural degree;

[1] That is, the sieur de Matecolom.

[2] *Nostre apprentissage.*

[3] The unhappy first-fruits of young warriors, and the hard apprenticeship of war to come. — Virgil, *Æneid*, XI, 156.

[4] See Livy, XXVIII, 21. The princes were Corbis and Orsua.

but that is not properly valour, since it derives its support from skill, and has other foundation than itself. The honour of combat consists in rivalry in courage, not in science; and, consequently, I have seen one of my friends, renowned as a great master in that exercise, choose in his quarrels weapons which deprived him of the means of that advantage, and depend solely on good-fortune and confidence, so that the victory might not be attributed to his fencing rather than to his prowess; and in my childhood gentlemen avoided the reputation of good fencers as insulting, and secreted themselves to learn the art, as being one of cunning, derogatory to genuine and simple valour.

Non schivar, non parar, non ritirarsi
Voglion costor, ne qui destrezza ha parte.
Non danno i' colpi finti hor pieni, hor scarsi;
Toglie l'ira e il furor l'uso de l'arte.
Odi le spade horribilmente urtarsi
A mezzo il ferro; il pie d'orma non parte;
Sempre è il pie fermo, è la man sempre in moto;
Ne scende taglio in van, ne punta à voto.[1]

Shooting at butts, tourneys, and joustings, the counterfeits of war, were the exercise of our fathers; this other exercise is less noble, inasmuch as it looks only to a private end; it teaches us to destroy one another, contrary to the laws and justice, and in every way always produces harmful results. It is much more meet and becoming to exercise ourselves in things which strengthen, not impair, our government, which concern the public security and the common glory.

Publius Rutilius, consul, was the first who instructed the soldier in handling his weapons with skill and science; who joined art to valour, not for use in private quarrels; it was

[1] These do not wish to avoid the combat, or to stop it, or to retreat; nor has skill here any part. They do not give blows now feigned, now full, now few; anger and rage deprive them of the use of art. Hear their swords clash horribly, blade against blade; their feet do not move from their position; their feet are always firm, their hands always in motion; no blow descends in vain, no thrust is wasted. — Tasso, *Jerusalem Delivered*, XII, 55.

for war and for the quarrels of the Roman people;[1] (*c*) a manner of fencing suitable for common people and citizens.[2] And besides the example of Cæsar, who ordered his men to aim chiefly at the faces of Pompey's soldiers in the battle of Pharsalia,[3] a thousand other commanders have likewise bethought themselves to invent new kinds of weapons, new ways of striking and defending, according to the need of the immediate affair. (*b*) But just as Philopœmen condemned wrestling, in which he excelled, inasmuch as the training employed for that exercise was different from that which pertains to military instruction, to which alone he thought men of worth should apply themselves,[4] so it seems to me that this agility to which limbs are trained, these skilful withdrawals and motions, in which our youth are exercised in this new school, are not only useless, but rather contrary and harmful to the conduct of military combat. (*c*) Besides, our men employ therein [5] special weapons adapted to that particular use. And I have seen the time when it was not thought well for a gentleman, challenged to fight with sword and dagger, to appear equipped as a man-at-arms. It is worthy of consideration that Laches, in Plato, speaking of a training similar to ours in the handling of arms, says that he had never known any great soldier to come from that school, and especially not from the masters thereof.[6] As to them, our own experience says the same. For the rest, we can at least maintain that there are sufficient indications of there being no relation or resemblance. And in the education of children in his system, Plato forbids the art of boxing, introduced by Amycus and Epeius, and that of wrestling, by Antæus and Cercyon, because they have another aim than to render young men fit for military service, and do not contribute thereto.[7] But I find myself not a little distant from my theme.

(*a*) The Emperor Maurice, being warned by dreams and by many prognostications that one Phocas, a soldier then unknown, would kill him, asked his son-in-law Philippus

[1] See Valerius Maximus, II, 3.2.
[2] *Escrime populere et civile.*
[3] See Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar.*
[4] See Idem, *Life of Philopœmen.*
[5] That is, in fencing.
[6] See Plato, *Laches.*
[7] See Idem, *Laws*, book VII.

about this Phocas — his nature, his mode of life, and his character; and when, among other things, Philippus told him that he was cowardly and timid, the emperor forthwith concluded from that that he was capable of murder, and cruel.[1] What makes tyrants so bloodthirsty? It is their solicitude for their safety, and because their cowardly heart suggests to them no other means of ensuring it than by ridding themselves of those who can attack them, — even to women, — for fear of a scratch.

(*b*) Cuncta ferit, dum cuncta timet.[2]

(*c*) The first cruelties are committed for their own sake; thence is born the fear of a just revenge, which later produces a long series of fresh cruelties, to stifle the early ones by the later. Philip, King of Macedon, who had so many affairs to settle[3] with the Roman people, agitated by the horror excited by the murders committed at his command, being unable to decide on this method with regard to so many families injured by him at diverse times, took the course of seizing all the children of those whom he had had put to death, in order, day by day, to destroy them one after another, and thus establish his repose.[4]

A subject-matter that is admirable fits well wherever it is placed.[5] I, who am more heedful of the weight and utility of writings than of their order and sequence, am not afraid to give room here, a little by itself, to a most admirable anecdote.[6] Among those condemned by Philip was one Herodicus, Prince of the Thessalians. After him, he had more recently put to death his two sons-in-law, each of whom left a very young son. Theoxena and Archo were the two widows. Theoxena could not be induced to marry again,

[1] See Zonaras, III; Gentillet, *Discours sur le moyens de bien gouverner*, III, 8. The son-in-law's name was Philippicus.

[2] He strikes every thing, fearing every thing. — Claudian, *In Eutropium*, I, 182.

[3] *Tant de fusees à demesler.*

[4] See Livy, XL, 3.

[5] *Les belles matieres tiennent tousjours leur ranc, en quelque place qu'on les seme.*

[6] The edition of 1595 adds: *Quand elles sont si riches de leur propre beauté, et se peuvent seules trop soustenir, je me contente du bout d'un poil, pour les joindre à mon propos.*

although much sought after. Archo married Poris, the chief man among the Æneans, and had by him a number of children, and died leaving them all very young. Theoxena, impelled by maternal affection for her nephews, married Poris, to have them under her guidance and protection. And now comes the proclamation of the king's edict. The courageous mother, fearing both Philip's cruelty and the license of his satellites, in respect to those beautiful and tender children, dared to say that she would kill them with her own hands rather than give them up. Poris, alarmed by this declaration, promises her to steal away with them, and carry them to Athens, to the keeping of some trustworthy and hospitable friends of his. They make use of the opportunity afforded by an annual festival celebrated at Ænia, in honour of Æneas, and go thither. Having been present during the day at the ceremonies and a public banquet, at night they slip off in a vessel made ready for them, to make their way by sea. The wind was adverse to them; and on the morrow, finding themselves in sight of the place from which they had sailed, they were pursued by the guards of the port. As these were approaching, while Poris was labouring to hasten the sailors in flight, Theoxena, frantic with love and vengefulness, reverting to her first idea, brought forward weapons and poison, and, showing them to the children, said: "Hearken, my children; death is now the only resource for your defence and liberty, and will be an occasion for the gods to exercise their sacred justice; these drawn swords, these full cups, open the way into it. Courage! and thou, my son, who art the eldest, grasp this blade, to die the manlier death." Having on one side this vehement persuasion, and on the other the foe at their throat, they wildly seized, each one upon what was nearest at hand, and, half dead, were thrown into the sea. Theoxena, proud of having so gloriously provided for the safety of all her children, clinging closely to her husband, said, "Let us follow those boys, my beloved, and share their place of burial." And thus locked in each other's arms, they threw themselves overboard, so that the vessel was brought back to the shore without its masters.[1]

[1] See Livy, XL, 4.

(*a*) Tyrants, in order to do both things at once, — to kill and to make their wrath felt, — have exerted all their skill in finding means of prolonging death. They desire their enemies to be gone, but not so quickly that they may not have time to relish their vengeance. Thereupon they are in great perplexity; for, if the tortures are very severe, they are short; if they are long drawn out, they are not painful enough to satisfy them; and to this end, they give rein to their wits. We see a thousand examples of it in ancient times; and I am not sure that we do not, unthinkingly, retain some trace of this barbarity. All that goes beyond simple death seems to me pure cruelty; our justice can not hope that he whom the fear of death, and of being beheaded or hanged, will not keep from wrong-doing will be deterred therefrom by the apprehension of a slow fire, or of pincers, or of the wheel. And it may be that we thus drive them to despair; for what can be the state of a man's mind, awaiting death for twenty-four hours, broken on the wheel, or, after the old manner, nailed to a cross?

Josephus narrates that, during the wars of the Romans in Judæa, on passing a place where, three days before, several Jews had been crucified, he recognised three of his friends, and obtained permission to take them away; two died, he says, the other lived on.[1] (*c*) Chalcondylas, a trustworthy man, in the memoirs that he left of things that happened in his time and in his neighbourhood, reports, as the worst punishment, that which the Emperor Mohammed often employed — the cutting men into two parts across the middle, at the diaphragm, with a single blow of a scimitar; whence it came about that they died, as it were, two deaths at once; and he says that both parts, full of life, were seen to stir, as moved by great agony, for a long time after.[2] I do not believe that there was much feeling in those movements. The punishments most dreadful to behold are not always the worst to endure. And I find more atrocious what is told by other historians, regarding the Epirote lords, that he[3] had them flayed little by little, with such malicious skill that

[1] See Josephus, *Autobiography*, near the end.
[2] See Chalcondylas, X, 2. [3] Mohammed.

their life lasted fifteen days in that agony.[1] And these other two: Crœsus, having seized a gentleman, a favourite of his brother Pantaleon, carried him to the shop of a fuller, where he had him scraped and carded by the cards and combs of that trade, till he died of it;[2] George Sechel, leader of those Polish peasants who, under the title of a crusade, committed so many crimes, being defeated in battle by the vayvode of Transylvania, and captured, was for three days bound naked to a raft, exposed to all the varieties of torture that any one could suggest, during which time they kept the other prisoners fasting. At last, he living and beholding, they forced Lucat, his dear brother, for whose safety alone he had entreated, taking upon himself all the blame for their misdeeds, to drink his blood; and they compelled twenty of his most favoured captains to eat his flesh, tearing it apart violently, and swallowing the pieces. The rest of his body and the entrails, when he was dead, were boiled, and others of his following were forced to eat them.[3]

CHAPTER XXVIII

ALL THINGS HAVE THEIR SEASON

I SAID in connection with the last chapter that the longer the Essay, the greater, almost always, its interest. But this short Essay is peculiarly delightful. Its mingling of personal and impersonal reflections, of admirable citations and of original expressions, makes every line of value.

THEY who compare Cato the Censor with the younger Cato, murderer of himself, (*c*) compare two noble natures of kindred character.[4] The first displayed his under more aspects, and was the superior in military exploits and in the usefulness of his public functions. But the virtue of the younger, besides that it were blasphemy to compare any other to it in vigour, was much more unspotted. For who could acquit that of the Censor of envy and ambition, since he dared to assail the

[1] See J. de Lavardin, *Histoire de Scanderbeg.*

[2] See Plutarch, *Of the malignity of Herodotus.*

[3] See Paulus Jovius, *Historiarum sui Temporis Libri*, XIII.

[4] In 1580 to 1588 the sentence ends thus: *font à mon opinion grand honneur au premier; car je les trouve eslongnez d'une extreme distance.*

honour of Scipio, who was much greater than he and than any other man of his time, in rectitude and in all excellent qualities? (*a*) What, among other things, they tell of him, that in his extreme old age he set about learning the Greek language with eager zest,[1] as if to quench a long thirst, does not seem to me to be very honourable to him. It is really what we call falling into second childhood. All things have their season, good things and all; and I can say my Pater Noster at an unfit moment; [2] (*c*) as T. Quintius Flaminius was blamed because, being in command of the army, he was seen standing apart, at the very hour of the onset of a battle that he won, busying himself in praying to God.[3]

(*b*) Imponit finem sapiens et rebus honestis.[4]

(*a*) Eudemonidas, seeing Xenocrates, then very old, eagerly listening to the teachings of his school, "When," he said, "will this man know, if he is still learning?" [5] (*b*) And Philopœmen said to those who extolled King Ptolemy because he daily enured his person to the exercise of arms: "It is not a praiseworthy thing in a king of his years to exercise himself in them; he ought henceforth really to use them." [6] (*a*) The young man should make his preparations, the old man enjoy them, say the sages.[7] And the greatest defect that they observe in our nature is that our desires constantly renew their youth. We are forever beginning anew to live.[8] Our study and our desire ought some time to give evidence of old age. We have one foot in the grave, and our appetites and our pursuits are newly born.

(*b*) Tu secanda marmora
Locas sub ipsum funus, et sepulchri
Immemor, struis domos.[9]

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Cato the Censor*.
[2] Cf. Book I, chap. 56 (Vol. II, p. 24).
[3] See Plutarch, *Parallel between Flaminius and Philopœmen*.
[4] The wise man puts limits even to praiseworthy things.— Juvenal, VI, 444.
[5] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians*.
[6] See Idem, *Life of Philopœmen*. [7] See Seneca, *Epistle* 36.4.
[8] See Idem, *Epistles* 13.17 and 23.9.
[9] When your funeral is close at hand, you order the cutting of marbles, and, forgetful of the tomb, you build houses. — Horace, *Odes*, II, 18.17.

(*c*) The longest of my plans is not of a year's extent; henceforth I think of nothing but coming to an end; I rid myself of all new hopes and undertakings, take my last farewell of all the places I leave, and dispossess myself every day of what I have. *Olim jam nec perit quicquam mihi nec acquiritur. . . . Plus superest viatici quam viæ.*[1]

Vixi, et quem dederat cursum fortuna peregi.[2]

It is, in fine, the only solace I find in my old age, that it deadens in me many desires and solicitudes whereby life is disquieted: solicitude about the course of the world, solicitude about riches, rank, knowledge, health, myself. (*a*) A man is learning to talk when he should be learning to be silent forever.[3] (*c*) One may always continue to study, but not to go to school; how foolish for an old man to be learning the alphabet![4]

(*b*) Diversos diversa juvant, non omnibus annis
Omnia conveniunt.[5]

(*a*) If we must study, let us study something suited to our condition, so that we may be able to reply as he did who, when he was asked wherefore he thus studied in his decrepitude, replied: "That I may the better and more gladly depart hence."[6] Such study was that of the younger Cato, who, when he felt that his end was near, turned to Plato's discourse on the eternity of the soul.[7] Not, as we must believe, that he had not long been supplied with every sort of provision for such a flitting; of confidence, of firm resolution, and of instruction, he had more than Plato had in his writings; his learning and his courage were in this respect superior to philosophy. He resorted to that occupation, not

[1] For a long time I have neither lost nor gained any thing. . . . I have more provisions than I have length of way to go. — Seneca, *Epistle* 77.3.

[2] I have lived and accomplished the career that fortune allotted me. — Virgil, *Æneid*, IV, 653.

[3] In 1580 to 1588: *lorsqu'il faut apprendre à mourir.*

[4] See Seneca, *Epistle* 36.4.

[5] Different things please different men; not all things are appropriate to all ages. — Maximianus (Pseudo-Gallus), I, 104.

[6] See Seneca, *Epistle* 68.14.

[7] See Plutarch, *Life of Cato of Utica.*

to make his death easier, but, like one for whom even sleep is not broken because of the importance of some deliberation, thus, without choice and without change, he continued his studies, with the other habitual actions of his life. (*c*) The night when he had been refused the prætorship he passed playing at games of chance; that on which he was to die, in reading; loss of life or loss of office — it was all one to him.[1]

CHAPTER XXIX

OF VIGOUR

The admirably expressed page of good sense with which this Essay opens, in which Montaigne says that he thinks that transient exhibitions of *vertu* (which word to him meant strength of mind — *vigour* — rather than our "virtue"), powerful *flights*, are possible to many men, and that nothing but justness of judgement and steadiness of purpose, that is, an ordered life, unfailingly denotes a superior character — this page sounds the same note as the fine lines of Ben Jonson (to Lucy, Countess of Bedford) about

> The manly soul that should, with even powers,
> The rock, the spindle and the shears control
> Of destiny, and spin its own free hours.

Montaigne adduces Pyrrho as one who strove to make his life harmonise with his beliefs; and then brings forward various instances, near and distant, of men and women who, for motives more or less trivial, more or less serious, more or less sudden, more or less meditated, found the strength to mutilate or destroy themselves.

On a later page he turns to the conception of fate, and to the strength, the courage, which comes from a belief in fate: a courage quite lacking in his fellow countrymen, but testified to as existing in other days and other nations. Two exceptions — two believers in fate — among his contemporaries whom he mentions, one would like to fit names to. The last I suppose to be Henri IV.

I FIND by experience that there is much difference between the sudden impulses and outgoings of the mind and a fixed and constant habit; and I see clearly that there is nothing we are not capable of, nay, even to surpassing divinity itself, says some one,[2] inasmuch as it is a greater thing to be made by oneself incapable of suffering

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 71.11.

[2] See Idem, *De Providentia*, VI; cf. *Epistle* 53, 11.12.

than to be so by original condition; and even to combine with the weakness of man a godlike resolution and confidence. But this is only at moments.[1] And in the lives of those heroes of ancient times there are sometimes miraculous passages which seem far to surpass our natural powers; but they are passages only, in truth; and it is hard to believe that one can so colour and imbue the mind with these conditions of excitement that they become habitual and as if natural to it. It happens to ourselves, who are but abortions of men, that we sometimes shoot our soul, stimulated by the speech or example of others, very far beyond its common height; but it is a sort of passion which impels and excites it, and in some wise ravishes it from itself; [2] for, that sudden gust overblown, we find that unconsciously it unbends and relaxes of itself, if not quite to the lowest degree, at least so as to be no more the same; so much that then, on any slight occasion, for a bird lost or a glass broken, we allow ourselves to be moved almost as one of the common people. (*c*) Except regularity, moderation, and steadiness, I consider that any thing may be achieved by a man who is very imperfect and, as a whole, full of failings. (*a*) For this reason the sages say that, to judge a man rightly, it is needful to observe chiefly his usual actions, and to surprise him in his every-day dress. Pyrrho, who built upon ignorance so droll a belief, tried, like all other true philosophers, to make his life correspond to his doctrine. And because he maintained that the weakness of the human judgement was so extreme as to be incapable of any choice or inclination, and conceived it as suspended in perpetual equilibrium, regarding and accepting all things as indifferent, it is related that he always maintained the same conduct and bearing: if he had begun a remark, he never failed to finish it, even when he to whom he was speaking had gone away; if he was walking, he did not turn aside for any obstacle that might present itself, and was saved by his friends from precipices, collision with vehicles, and other mishaps. For to fear or to avoid any thing would have been in opposition to his assertions, which denied to the very senses [3] all choice and certainty.

[1] *Par secousse.* [2] Cf. Book II, chap. 2 (Vol. II, pp. 61, 62).

[3] *C'eust esté choquer ses propositions, qui ostoient au sens mesmes.*

Sometimes he endured being cut and cauterised with such resolution that he was not seen even to wink his eyes.[1]

It is something to bring the mind to such ideas; it is more to connect with them the desired results; still, this is not impossible; but to connect these with such perseverance and resolution as to establish by them one's ordinary course of conduct, surely it is almost incredible that a man should be able to do this in undertakings so far removed from common custom. And for this reason this same philosopher, being sometimes found in his own house scolding his sister very harshly, and being censured for so failing in his indifference, "What!" said he, "must even this foolish woman serve as evidence of my rule?" Another time, when he was seen defending himself from a dog, he said, "It is very difficult to put off man altogether; and we must endeavour and strive to combat things, first by actions, but, at the worst, by reason and arguments." [2]

About seven or eight years ago, a villager, still living some two leagues from here, who had long been vexed by his wife's jealousy, returning one day from his work, and she welcoming him with her usual brawling, he became so frenzied that, on the spot, with the sickle that he still had in his hand, s'estant moissonné tout net les pieces qui la mettoyent en fievre, les luy jetta au nez. Et il se dit qu'un jeune gentilhomme des nostres, amoureux et gaillard, ayant par sa perseverance amolli en fin le cœur d'une belle maistresse, desesperé de ce que, sur le point de la charge, il s'estoit trouvé mol luy mesmes et defailly, et que

non viriliter
Iners senile penis extulerat caput,[3]

s'en priva soudain revenu au logis, et l'envoya, cruelle et sanglante victime, pour la purgation de son offence.[4] Si c'eust esté par discours et religion, comme les prestres de Cibele, que ne dirions nous d'une si hautaine entreprise?

A few days since, at Bragerac,[5] five leagues from my

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Pyrrho*.
[2] See *Ibid*.
[3] Tibullus, *De Inertia Inguinis*.
[4] See Henri Estienne, *Apologie pour Hérodote*, XV, 29.
[5] Bergerac.

house, higher up the river Dordogne, a woman who had been maltreated and beaten the night before by her husband, a man of morose and choleric nature, determined to escape from his harshness at the cost of her life; and when she got up in the morning, having greeted her neighbours as usual, she let fall a word or two about her affairs, and taking her sister by the hand, she led her to a bridge; and after she had taken leave of her as if in jest, without showing any sort of change or alteration, threw herself headlong into the river, where she perished. The most notable thing in this is that the scheme was ripening in her brain throughout a whole night. It is quite another thing with the Indian women; for it being customary with them for the husband to have many wives, and for the one who is dearest to kill herself when her husband dies, each one, in the whole plan of her life, aims at gaining this point and this advantage over her companions; and the good offices that they perform for the husband look to no other reward than to be preferred in accompanying him in death.[1]

(*b*) Ubi mortifero jacta est fax ultima lecto,
Uxorum fusis stat pia turba comis;
Et certamen habent lethi, quæ viva sequatur
Conjugium; pudor est non licuisse mori.
Ardent victrices, et flammæ pectora præbent
Imponuntque suis ora perusta viris.[2]

(*c*) There is a man even in our own day who writes of having seen this custom in practice among those oriental nations; and not only the wife was buried with the husband, but also the female slaves that he had enjoyed. It is done in this fashion. The husband having died, the widow may, if she wishes (but few wish it), demand two or three months' delay, to settle her affairs. When the day has come, she mounts her horse, arrayed as for her nuptials, and with a

[1] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 27; Ælian, *Varia Historia*, VII, 18.

[2] When the kindling torch has been thrown on the funeral pile, the crowd of faithful wives, with dishevelled hair, surrounding it, strive to the utmost for death, and while living, to follow their spouse; it is a disgrace not to be allowed to die. The winners take fire and offer their bodies to the flames, and press their scorched lips on their husbands'.—Propertius, III, 13.17.

joyous bearing goes, as she says, to sleep with her husband, holding in her left hand a mirror, in the other an arrow. Going on her way thus in state, attended by her friends and kinsmen and by a great concourse of people in holiday mood, she is presently brought to the public place appointed for such spectacles. It is a large space, in the centre of which is a pit filled with wood, and adjoining this a mound four or five steps high, to which she is conducted, and there served with a sumptuous repast. After this she falls to dancing and singing, and, whenever it seems well to her, orders the fire to be lighted. That done, she steps down and, taking by the hand the nearest of her husband's kindred, they go together to the near-by river, where she strips herself naked, and distributes her jewels and garments among her friends, then plunges into the water as if thus to wash away her sins. Coming forth, she envelops herself in a yellow linen cloth fourteen feet [1] long, and, giving her hand again to the same kinsman of her husband, reascends the little hill, whence she speaks to the people and asks their favour for her children if she has any. Between the pit and the mound a curtain may be drawn, to shut out the sight of that glowing furnace; this some forbid, to show more courage. When she has finished what she has to say, a woman presents her with a vessel full of oil, to anoint her head and her whole body; which, having so done, she throws into the fire and at the same moment flings herself in. Immediately the people throw upon her a quantity of logs, to keep her from lingering, and all their joy is changed to wailing and sorrow. If they are persons of meaner condition, the dead man's body is taken to the place where they wish to bury him, and there placed, sitting, the widow on her knees before him, closely embracing him; and she thus remains while they build a wall about them; and when it has reached the height of the woman's shoulders, some one of her kin, taking her head from behind, wrings her neck; and when she has given up the ghost, the wall is quickly built up and closed over, wherein they remain buried.

(*a*) In this same country, there was something like this among their Gymnosophists; for, not by compulsion from

[1] *Brasses:* a measure of which the length is not now known.

others, nor from the impetuosity of a sudden impulse, but in express acknowledgement of their rule, their custom was, when they had reached a certain age, or found themselves threatened by some disease, to have a funeral pile built, and upon it placed a much-adorned bed; and after having joyously entertained their friends and acquaintances, they lay down on this bed with such resolution that, when it was set on fire, they were not seen to move either foot or hand; and thus died one of them, Calanus, in the presence of the whole army of Alexander the Great.[1] (*b*) And the man was regarded among them neither as godly nor as blessed, who had not thus destroyed himself, dismissing his soul purged and purified by fire, after all that it had of mortal and terrestrial had been consumed. (*a*) The steadfast premeditation of this during the whole life is what is marvellous.

Among our other matters of dispute has entered in that of *Fatum;* and, to connect things to come, and even our will, with fixed and inevitable necessity, we still resort to this argument of ancient times: since God foresees that all things will thus happen, as he undoubtedly does, it needs must be that they thus happen. To which our masters reply that the seeing that something happens, as we do, and as God likewise does (for every thing being present to him, he sees rather than foresees), is not to compel it to happen; in truth, we see because things happen, and things do not happen because we see. The happening makes the knowledge, not the knowledge the happening. That which we see happen happens; but it might happen differently; and God, in the register of the causes of the events of which he had prescience, has there also those which are called casual, and the voluntary ones, which depend on the freedom he has given to our will; and he knows that we shall do amiss because we shall have chosen to do amiss.

Now, I have seen many men encourage their troops with this fatal necessity; for, if our death is attached to a certain moment, neither the enemy's musketry, nor our boldness, nor our flight and cowardice can bring it nearer or set it further off. That is all very well to say, but you will not find the man who will act upon it. And, if it be the fact that

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Alexander.*

a strong and lively faith draws after it actions of the same sort, surely this faith of which our mouths are so full is in our time wonderfully weak, unless it be that the contempt it has for works makes it scorn their company. Nevertheless, on this same subject the sire de Joinville, the most credible of witnesses, tells us of the Bedouins, a nation blended with the Saracens, with whom King Saint Louis had dealings in the Holy Land, that they in their faith believed so implicitly that every man's life was from all eternity prescribed and measured off by unavoidable foreordination, that they went into battle unarmed save for a Turkish sword, and with their bodies covered only with a white cloth. And for their extremest malediction, when they were angry with one another, they had always in their mouths, "Accursed be thou, as he that arms himself for fear of death!" [1] This test of belief and faith is very different from ours. And of this class is also that given by the two friars of Florence in our fathers' day. Being engaged in some learned controversy, they agreed to walk together into a fire, before all the people and in the public square, each as a proof of the truth of his side. And all the preparations for this were already made, and the thing just on the point of execution, when it was interrupted by an unforeseen accident.[2]

(*c*) A young Turkish nobleman, having performed a distinguished feat of arms, in his own person, in the sight of the two armies, that of Amurath and that of Hunyades, ready to join battle, being asked by Amurath what had inspired him, being so young and inexperienced (for it was the first war that he had seen), with such heroic courage, replied that he had had for chief teacher in valour a hare. "One day," he said, "while hunting, I came across a hare in his form, and although I had two fine greyhounds at my side, still it seemed to me that, to make sure of not missing him, it would be better to use my bow, for he was an excellent mark. I began to discharge my arrows, and let fly the whole forty that there were in my quiver, not only without striking him, but without rousing him. At last I loosed my grey-

[1] See Joinville, *Vie de Saint Louis*, XXX.

[2] See Commines, VIII, 9; Gentillet, *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner*, II, 9.

hounds, and they were no more successful. I learned from this that he had been protected by his destiny, and that neither darts nor swords reach their mark except by permission of our fate, which it is not in our power to repel or to advance."[1] This tale should serve in passing to show us how our reason is swayed by all sorts of objects.

A personage great in years, in name, in dignity, and in learning boasted to me of having been led to a certain very momentous change of faith by an outside suggestion so odd and, indeed, so far from convincing, that I found it stronger for the contrary effect. He called it a miracle, and so did I, in a different sense. The historians of the Turks say that the conviction generally current among them, of the fatal and inflexible limitation of their days, manifestly assists in giving them confidence in dangers.[2] And I know a great prince who turns this idea nobly to his advantage,[3] if fortune continues to back him.

(*a*) There has not come to pass within our memory a more wonderful effect of resolution than in those two men who plotted the death of the Prince of Orange.[4] It is marvellous how the second one, who did the deed, could be stimulated to an undertaking in which his companion, who had done his utmost, had such ill success; and, following his steps and with the same weapon, assail a lord armed with so recent a lesson of suspicion, powerful in his following of friends and in bodily strength, in his own hall, amidst his guards, in a city wholly devoted to him. Surely he employed therein a very resolute hand, and a spirit excited by a vehement passion. A dagger is more certain to strike home; but inasmuch as it requires more motion and strength of arm than a pistol, its blow is more likely to be turned aside or hindered. That he rushed to what he knew to be certain death I have not much doubt; for the hope with which they may have thought to beguile him could find no lodgement in a resolute mind; and the manner of his exploit shows that

[1] See Chalcondylas, VII, 8.

[2] See *Ibid.*

[3] In 1595 is added: *Soit qu'il la croye, soit qu'il la prenne pour excuse à se hazarder extraordinairement, pourveu que fortune*, etc.

[4] William the Silent. The two men were Jehan de Jeaureguy (1582) and Balthazar Gérard (1584).

he lacked that no more than courage. The grounds of a conviction so powerful may be various; for our imagination does what it pleases with itself and with us. The deed that was done near Orléans [1] was in no wise similar; there was more chance than energy in it; the wound had not been mortal if fortune had not made it so; and the undertaking to fire from horseback and from a distance, at a man moved by the movement of his horse, was the undertaking of one who preferred to fail in his object rather than to fail to escape. What followed after showed this. For he was so dazed and intoxicated by the thought of so great a deed that his wits were completely lost and bemuddled, both as to managing his flight and managing his tongue in his answers. What need he have done save fly back to his friends across a river? That is something to which I have had recourse in less dangers, and which I consider of small risk, however broad may be the stream, provided that your horse finds the entrance easy and that you perceive on the other side a convenient landing-place in relation to the current. The other,[2] when they announced to him his horrible sentence, "I was prepared for this," he said; "I will astonish you by my endurance."

(*c*) The Assassins, a tribe in the dependence of Phœnicia, are considered among the Mohammedans as having supreme religious zeal and purity of morals. They hold that the most certain means of deserving Paradise is to kill some one of different religious belief. For which reason, scorning all danger to themselves, in favour of so advantageous a deed, one or two are often seen, at the price of certain death, to offer to assassinate (we have borrowed this word from their name) their enemy in the midst of his forces. Thus was slain our Count Raymond of Tripoli in his own city.[3]

[1] The assassination of the duc de Guise by Poltrot de Méré, in 1563.

[2] Balthazar Gérard, the assassin of the Prince of Orange.

[3] See du Haillant, *Histoire des Rois de France*. The text of 1595 adds: *pendant nos entreprinses de la guerre saincte; et pareillement Conrad, marquis de Mont-Ferrat, les meurtriers conduits au supplice, tous enflez et fiers d'un si beau chef d'œuvre.*

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CHAPTER XXX

OF A CHILD MONSTER

THIS chapter demands but few words, and the last paragraph, added in 1595, is the only one that need be read twice, or even once. But the *c'est à croire* suggestion there is extremely interesting in its *modernness;* and the quotation from Cicero may well be pondered.

THIS tale shall go without comment, for I leave physicians to discourse of it. I saw the day before yesterday a child whom two men and a nurse (who said they were his father and uncle and aunt) were taking about to get money by exhibiting him, because of his strange appearance. In other respects he was as ordinary children,[1] and stood on his feet, walked, and babbled much like others of the same age; he had not yet been willing to take any other nourishment than from his nurse's breast; and what they tried, in my presence, to put into his mouth, he chewed a little and put it out without swallowing it; his cries seemed to have something peculiar about them; he was just fourteen months old. Below his paps he was caught and fastened to another child without a head, who had the back passage choked, otherwise sound; for, although one arm was shorter than the other, it had been broken by accident at their birth. They were joined face to face, as if a smaller child were trying to embrace a larger one. The ligature and the space between them was only four finger-lengths, or thereabout, so that, if you lifted up the imperfect child, you saw beneath it the other's navel, since the ligature was between the paps and the navel. The imperfect one's navel could not be seen, but easily all the rest of his body. So all of the imperfect one that was not attached, as the arms, buttocks, thighs, and legs, was hanging and dangling from the other, and might reach half-way down his legs. The nurse informed us that he passed water from both bodies; and the limbs of the other body were plump and healthy in the same degree as his own; but they were smaller and slenderer.

[1] *D'une forme commune.*

This double body, and these diverse limbs connected with a single head, might well furnish the king [1] with a favourable augury for maintaining the diverse parts and fractions of our realm under the union of his laws; but, lest the event belie this, it is better to let it pass, for divination can be only about things that have happened; (*c*) *ut quum facta sunt, tum ad conjecturam aliqua interpretatione revocantur.*[2] (*b*) As they say of Epimenides, that he divined things past.[3] Je vien de voir un pastre en Medoc, de trente ans ou environ, qui n'a aucune montre des parties genitales: il a trois trous par où il rend son eau incessament; il est barbu, a desir, et recherche l'attouchement des femmes.

(*c*) What we call monsters are not so to God, who sees in the immensity of his work the infinity of forms that he has comprised therein; and it is probable that this figure which astonishes us is related to and connected with some other figure of the same sort unknown to man. From his omniscience nothing comes forth save what is good and common and regular; but we do not see their disposition and relation. *Quod crebro videt, non miratur, etiam si cur fiat nescit. Quod ante non vidit, id, si evenerit, ostentum esse censet.*[4] We call contrary to Nature what comes about contrary to custom; nothing whatsoever exists which is not in accordance with her. Let this universal and natural fact expel from us the error and amazement that novelty brings us.

[1] Henri III.

[2] As when facts exist, then, by some kind of interpretation, they may be related to divination. — Cicero, *De Div.*, II, 31.

[3] See Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, III, 12.

[4] What he often sees he does not wonder at, although he does not know how it comes to pass. What he has not seen before, if it takes place, he ranks as a prodigy. — Cicero, *De Div.*, II, 27.

CHAPTER XXXI

OF ANGER

For ages it has been recognised that parents are not always the wisest guardians of their own children. The ancients considered chiefly those results of mistakes in education that concern the State; modern thinkers, those chiefly that concern the child itself. Montaigne was a modern in this as in so many other respects; and he takes his first illustrations of the sin of anger from its cruel effects on children, then touches on its injustice toward inferiors; and, after a digression on the difference between saying and doing, he dwells on a story of Plutarch's treatment of a slave, which, he says, was the occasion of this Essay. (At least, I so interpret the sentence, though I confess the phrase *à quartier* is puzzling and would seem to refer to the preceding digression.)

The story about Plutarch only enforces the note already struck, that chastisement should never be inflicted by one in anger. Then follow other considerations of anger, and other illustrations: the anger of women, and the feminine-like anger of the orator Celius, etc. One would like to know who *le plus cholere homme de France* may have been, or the "other" to whom Montaigne gave such sage counsel about not being *too* calm. "Sage" I call it a little ironically, for it is surely open to question whether Montaigne's theory is true that *on incorpere la cholere en la cachant.* It is the theory of a Gascon, and, as he himself says, of a not very choleric Gascon; for surely the unrestrained expression of anger, as of any passion, makes it, with most men, blaze the more hotly and the more frequently. But perhaps he has Shakespeare on his side:

> Anger is like
> A full hot horse who, being allowed his way,
> Self-mettle tires him.

But, on the other hand, in the splendid Alcibiades scene in *Timon of Athens*, it is in praise of his friend that Alcibiades says:

> And with such sober and unnoted passion
> He did behave his anger, ere 't was spent,
> As if he had but prov'd an argument.

It is amusing counsel that Montaigne reports himself as giving his family, and all the "personalities" that follow are very entertaining. It is a charming sentence with which the passage closes: "As advancing age sharpens my temper, I study to correct it; and I shall so manage, if I can, that I shall be henceforth so much the less peevish and hard to please as I shall have more excuse and inclination to be so."

There are only a few lines more: a few more words of wisdom.

PLUTARCH is admirable everywhere, but chiefly where he judges of human actions. We may read in the parallel between Lycurgus and Numa excellent things that he says on the subject of our great folly in abandoning children to the governance and care of their fathers. (*c*) The greater number of our civil governments, as Aristotle says, leave to every man, after the manner of the Cyclops, the guidance of his wife and children, according to his foolish and inconsiderate fancy;[1] and the Lacedæmonians and Cretans were almost alone in entrusting to the laws the schooling of childhood. (*a*) Who does not see that every thing in a state depends upon its[2] education and nurture? And yet, without any discernment, we leave it at the mercy of parents, however foolish and bad they may be. Among other things, how often, when passing through our streets, have I had a desire to devise something to avenge the little boys whom I saw whipped and knocked down and bruised by some father or mother, furious and mad with anger! You see them sally forth, fire and rage in their eyes, —

(*b*) rabie jecur incendente, feruntur
Præcipites ut saxa jugis abrupta, quibus mons
Subtrahitur, clivoque latus pendente recedit,[3] —

(and according to Hippocrates the most dangerous distempers are those that disfigure the face[4]), (*a*) with a sharp and violent voice, often against little boys who were but lately at nurse. And afterward, behold these children maimed and dulled with blows; and our laws make no account of it, as if these maimings and dislocations were not of members of our commonwealth.

(*b*) Gratum est quod patriæ civem populoque dedisti,
Si facis ut patriæ sit idoneus, utilis agris,
Utilis et bellorum et pacis rebus agendis.[5]

[1] See *Nicomachæan Ethics*, X, 9. [2] That of childhood.

[3] Agitated by rage, they are carried to an abyss, like rocks broken from their support, loosened from a mountain, which roll down a steep slope. — Juvenal, VI, 647.

[4] See Plutarch, *How to Restrain Anger*.

[5] It is a cause for gratitude that you have given a citizen to your country and your people, provided that you so act as to make him fit for the country's service, useful in agriculture, useful in the deeds of war and of peace. — Juvenal, XIV, 70.

(*a*) There is no passion which so disturbs the honesty of our judgements as anger. No one would hesitate to punish with death the judge who had sentenced his prisoner at the bar in anger; why is it any more permissible for fathers and schoolmasters, when in a passion, to flog children and chastise them? It is no longer correction, it is vengeance. Chastisement takes the place of medicine with children;[1] and should we tolerate a physician who was excited and vexed with his patient?

We ourselves, to do well, should never lay a hand on our servants whilst our anger lasts. When our pulse beats fast and we feel stirred, let us put off the matter; things will seem different to us, in truth, when we have become calm and cool again; it is passion that now rules us; it is passion that speaks; it is not we ourselves.[2] (*b*) Seen through it, faults seem greater to us, as bodies do when seen through a mist.[3] He who is hungry makes use of food; but he who desires to make use of chastisement should have neither hunger nor thirst.[4]

(*a*) Furthermore, chastisements that have been weighed and are made advisedly are received much better and with more profit by him who suffers them. Otherwise he does not think that he was justly condemned by a man moved by wrath and fury; and he alleges in his justification the extraordinary actions of his master, his flushed face, his unwonted oaths, and his disquietude and reckless haste.

(*b*) Ora tument ira, nigrescunt sanguine venæ,
Lumina Gorgoneo sævius igne micant.[5]

(*a*) Suetonius says that, Lucius Saturninus[6] having been condemned by Cæsar, the thing that was of most service to him with the people (to whom he appealed) for gaining his

[1] See Seneca, *De Ira*, I, 5.
[2] See *Ibid.*, III, 32.
[3] See Plutarch, *How to Restrain Anger.*
[4] See *Ibid.*
[5] Their faces swell with anger, their veins blacken with blood, their eyes flash with more than Gorgonean fire. — Ovid, *De Arte Amandi*, III, 503.
[6] The name was changed to *Caius Rabirius* in 1595. See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar*, XII.

cause was the animosity and harshness that Cæsar brought to that judgement.

Saying is a different thing from doing; the preaching and the preacher must be considered separately. Those persons of our day held good cards [1] who tried to cope with the truth of our Church by setting forth the vices of her ministry; she derives her testimonies from elsewhere; [2] theirs is a foolish way of arguing and would throw every thing into confusion. A man of good morals may have false belief, and a bad man may preach truth, yes, one who does not believe it. It is an admirable harmony, no doubt, when the deed and the word go together; and I do not wish to deny that the word, when deeds follow, is of more authority and efficacy; as Eudamidas said, when he heard a philosopher discoursing of war, "These are fine sayings, but he who utters them is not to be believed, for his ears are not accustomed to the sound of the trumpet." [3] Cleomenes, hearing a rhetorician hold forth concerning valour, began to laugh heartily; and the other taking offence, he said to him: "I should do so if it were a swallow who was talking about it; but if it were an eagle, I should listen to him gladly." [4] I perceive, it seems to me, in the writings of the ancients, that he who says what he thinks strikes home much more vigorously than he who dissembles. Hear Cicero speak of the love of liberty; hear Brutus speak of it; the mere written words of this man tell you that he would purchase it at the cost of his life. Let Cicero, the father of eloquence, treat of contempt of death; let Seneca treat of it also: the first drags himself feebly along, and you feel that he desires to solve for you something he has not solved for himself; he gives you no spirit, for he himself has none about this; [5] the other animates and excites you. I never read an author, especially of those who treat of virtue and of duties, that I do not enquire carefully what manner of man he has been. (*b*) For the Ephors of Sparta, seeing a dissolute man offer the people useful advice, com-

[1] *Ceux-là se sont donnez beau jeu.*
[2] That is, from other sources than the character of her ministers.
[3] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*
[4] See *Ibid.*
[5] Cf. Seneca, *Epistle* 64.3: *Non faciunt animum, quia non habent.*

manded him to keep silence, and begged a man of worth to claim for himself the idea, and to suggest it.[1]

(*a*) The writings of Plutarch, if well digested, reveal him to us as much as is needful, and I think that I know him to his soul; yet I could wish that we had some memoirs of his life; and I have been induced to go out of my way into this matter [2] because of my gratitude to Aulus Gellius for having left us in writing that anecdote of his character which bears upon my subject of anger. A slave of his, a bad and vicious man, but one whose ears were in some sort stored with philosophic lessons, having been, by Plutarch's order, stripped for some fault of his, while they were whipping him, complained at first that it was unreasonable, and that he had done nothing; but finally, beginning to cry out and insult his master in good earnest, he reproached him for not being philosophical as he boasted of being; and that he had often heard him say it was uncomely to be angry; indeed, that he had written a book about it; and that now, when head over ears in anger, his causing him to be so cruelly beaten entirely belied his writings. Whereupon Plutarch coolly and temperately replied: "Tell me, knave, from what do you judge that I am at this moment angry? My face, my voice, my colour, my speech—do they give you any evidence that I am excited? I do not think that my eyes are fierce, or my face disturbed, or my voice terrifyingly loud. Am I flushed? Do I foam at the mouth? Do any words escape from me which I may have to repent of? Do I pant? Do I tremble with wrath? For let me tell you these are the true signs of anger." And then, turning to him who was doing the whipping, "Go on with your business," he said, "while this fellow and I argue." [3] Such is the tale.

Architas Tarentinus, returning from a war in which he had been captain-general, found his house all out of order and his land neglected through the bad management of his bailiff; and having summoned him, "Look you," he said; "if I were not angry, I would cudgel you soundly." [4] And

[1] See Plutarch, *Of Hearing.* [2] *Me suis jetté en ce discours à quartier.*

[3] See Aulus Gellius, I, 26.40.

[4] See Plutarch, *On the bringing up of children* and *On the delays of divine justice;* also, Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, IV, 36.

Plato likewise, being chafed by one of his slaves, gave Speusippus orders to punish him, excusing himself from laying his own hand on him on the ground that he was vexed.[1] Charillus, a Lacedæmonian, speaking to a Helot who carried himself too insolently and audaciously toward him, "By the gods," he cried, "if I were not angry, I would kill you this very moment!" [2]

It is a passion that takes pleasure in itself and flatters itself. How often, being disturbed without true reason, if we are offered some good defence or excuse, we fall into high dudgeon against the truth itself, and innocence! I remember in this connection a wonderful example in ancient times. Piso, a man in every other respect of notable virtue, being excited against one of his soldiers because, returning alone from foraging, he could give him no account of where he had left a companion of his, held it for certain that he had killed him, and forthwith condemned the other to death. And when he is on the gallows, lo! the lost companion arrives. The whole army was greatly rejoiced; and, after much hugging and embracing between the two companions, the hangman took them both before Piso, every one expecting this to give him great pleasure. But it was far otherwise: for from shame and spleen his violence, which was still at its height, was redoubled; and with a craftiness which his passion suddenly suggested to him he made three guilty men of them, because one of them was found innocent, and ordered them all three to be despatched: the first soldier, because judgement had been passed against him; the second, who had strayed away, because he was the cause of his companion's death; and the hangman, for not obeying the command given him.[3]

(*b*) They who have to deal with testy women may have learned by experience what a rage they are thrown into when one meets their excitement with silence and composure, and disdains to feed their wrath. The orator Cælius was exceedingly choleric by nature. One who was supping in his

[1] See Plutarch, *ubi supra;* Valerius Maximus, IV, 1, *ext.* 1.

[2] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc., and *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*

[3] See Seneca, *De Ira*, I, 16.

company, a man of mild and gentle conversation, in order not to provoke him, adopted the course of approving all he said, and agreeing with it. Cælius, unable to suffer his vexation thus to die away without nutriment, exclaimed: "By the gods, deny something, I say! that there may be two of us."[1] They[2] likewise get into a passion only so that some one may get into a passion with them, in imitation of the laws of love. Phocion, with a man who interrupted his talk by vehemently insulting him, did nothing but keep silence and give him full time to exhaust his anger; that done, without any reference to the hindrance, he resumed his talk at the point at which he had dropped it.[3] There is no retort so stinging as such contempt. Regarding the most choleric man in France (and it is always an imperfection, but more excusable in a military man, for in that profession there are certainly occasions which can not dispense with it[4]), I often see that he makes a greater effort than any other man I know[5] to curb his anger; it moves him so violently and furiously, —

> magno veluti cum flamma sonore
> Virgea suggeritur costis undantis aheni,
> Exultantque æstu latices; furit intus aquaï
> Fumidus atque alte spumis exuberat amnis;
> Nec jam se capit unda; volat vapor ater ad auras,[6] —

that he must needs put a cruel constraint upon himself to moderate it. As for me, I know no passion which I could make so great an effort to cloak and bear up against. I would not put so high a price upon wisdom. I do not so much consider what a man does, as what it costs him not to do worse.

Another boasted to me of the composure and gentleness of his deportment, which is, in truth, remarkable. I told him

[1] See Seneca, *De Ira*, III, 8.
[2] That is, women.
[3] See Plutarch, *Political Precepts*.
[4] See Seneca, *De Ira*, I, for an opposite conclusion.
[5] *C'est le plus patient homme que je cognoisse.*
[6] As when a fire of twigs burns noisily under the sides of a cauldron, and the water dances in boiling; within, the steam mounts and rises high with foam; the water escapes; a dark vapour flies up into the air. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VII, 462.

that it was, indeed, something, especially for those of high positions like himself, observed by every one, to appear before the world as always discreetly self-governed; but that the chief thing was to take heed for his inner being and for himself; and that, in my opinion, it was not managing his affairs well to fret himself inwardly, which I feared that he did, in order to maintain that mask and that outward appearance of composure. We incorporate anger in ourselves by concealing it; as Diogenes said to Demosthenes, who, fearing to be seen in a tavern, withdrew to the back of it: "The more you withdraw, the more you enter therein." [1] It is my opinion that it is better to give one's servant a blow on the cheek a little unseasonably than to put one's mind to the trouble of presenting this grave demeanour; and I should prefer to show forth my passions rather than brood upon them at my own cost; they lose their strength when aired, and by expressing themselves; it is better that their point should be turned away from us than against ourselves. (*c*) *Omnia vitia in aperto leviora sunt; et tunc perniciosissima cum simulata sanitate subsidunt.*[2]

(*b*) I warn those in my family whose position authorises displeasure in them, first, that they govern their anger discreetly and do not pour it out recklessly; for that impairs its effect and weight; hasty and constant noisy scolding becomes a habit, and consequently every one makes light of it; when you make use of it to a servant for his theft, it is not felt, inasmuch as it is the same that he has known you to make use of a hundred times because he has washed a glass badly, or misplaced a stool; second, that they do not waste their displeasure on the air, and that they see to it that their reproof reaches him of whom they complain; for ordinarily they scold before he is in their presence, and continue to scold an age after he has gone;

et secum petulans amentia certat.[3]

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Diogenes*.

[2] All open vices are comparatively unimportant; and those are most pernicious that lurk under an appearance of health. — Seneca, *Epistle* 56.10.

[3] And the insane man, seeking [a foe], attacks himself. — Claudian, *In Eutropium*, I, 237.

They quarrel with their own shadow, and carry this bluster to some place where there is no one either punished or injured by it, save by loud wrangling with their voices to a person who can do nothing about the matter. In like manner, I blame those who swagger and boast without an opponent; we should confine these rodomontades where they take effect, —

> Mugitus veluti cum prima in prœlia taurus
> Terrificos ciet atque irasci in cornua tentat,
> Arboris obnixus trunco, ventosque lacessit
> Ictibus, et sparsa ad pugnam proludit arena.[1]

When I show displeasure, it is as sharply, but as briefly and privately, as I can; I let myself go in suddenness and violence, but not in confusion, so that I make no use of any insulting unselected words,[2] and I take heed only to place my darts where I think they will most wound; for I commonly use my tongue only. My servants come off more cheaply in great matters than in small; small ones take me by surprise, and the mischief of it is that, when you go over the precipice, it matters not who gave you the push — you go to the bottom all the same; the fall is enforced, impelled, and hastened by itself. On great occasions it satisfies me if they are so deserving of blame[3] that every one expects to see them produce reasonable anger; I pride myself on disappointing their expectation; I brace and prepare myself against these;[4] they make me uneasy,[5] and threaten to carry me far, should I follow them. I easily restrain myself from entering into them, and am strong enough, if I expect it, to repel the impulse of that passion, whatever violent cause it may have; but if it takes me unawares, and once seizes upon me, it carries me away, however trifling its cause. I bargain thus with those who may dispute with me: "When you feel

[1] As a bull in beginning the combat bellows terribly, and, exciting himself by the use of his horns, struggles with the trunk of a tree and beats the wind with his blows, scattering the sand in prelude to the fight. — Virgil, *Æneid*, XII, 103.

[2] *Si que j'aille jettant à l'abandon et sans chois toute sorte de parolles injurieuses.*

[3] *Justes.* [4] That is, great occasions.

[5] *Elles me mettent en cervelle.*

that I am the first to become heated, let me go, wrong or right; I will do the same in my turn. The tempest is engendered by the meeting of angers which are usually produced one by the other, and do not arise simultaneously. If we let each have its way, we shall always be at peace." A useful prescription, but of difficult execution. Sometimes, too, it happens that I counterfeit displeasure, for the management of my household, without any real emotion. As advancing age sharpens my temper, I study to correct it; and I shall so manage, if I can, that I shall be henceforth so much the less peevish and hard to please as I shall have more excuse and inclination to be so, although heretofore I have been of those who are least so.

(*a*) One more word, in conclusion. Aristotle says that anger sometimes serves courage and valour as a weapon. That is probable; however, they who deny it reply neatly that it is a weapon of strange use: for we control other weapons, this one controls us; our hand does not guide it, but it guides our hand; it possesses us, not we it.[1]

CHAPTER XXXII

DEFENCE OF SENECA AND PLUTARCH

THIS is a charming Essay, one of the *talking* ones; but there is the least possible to be said about it. One can remark that the judgement, on the next page, of the cardinal de Lorraine is very interesting, and that the terrible story beginning, "I have seen a peasant," contains a whole volume of historical information regarding the times, and of personal picturing regarding Montaigne's life; but the thing to do with this Essay is to *read* it!

MY familiarity with these personages, and the assistance that they give to my old age, (*c*) and to my book, which is constructed wholly of their spoils, (*a*) compel me to entertain their honour as my own.

As for Seneca, among a thousand little books that they of the so-called Reformed religion issue in defence of their

[1] See Seneca, *De Ira*, I, 16, alluding to Aristotle, *Nicomachæan Ethics*, III, 8.

cause, which sometimes come from an able hand, — it is a great pity that it should not be busied about a better subject, — I saw one some time ago, which, in order to enlarge and fill out the parallel that it desires to find between the government of our poor late King Charles IX and that of Nero, compares the late cardinal de Lorraine with Seneca: their fortunes, in having both been at the head of the governments of their princes, and also their characters, their conditions, and their conduct. Wherein, in my opinion, he does much honour to the lord cardinal; for, although I am of those who rate as high as possible his intellect, his eloquence, his zeal for his religion and for the service of his king, and his good-fortune in being born in an age when such a man was so unheard of and rare, and when, at the same time, it was so necessary for the public good that an ecclesiastical personage of this nobility and dignity should be a man of ability and qualified for his office, yet, to confess the truth, I do not rate his capacity as nearly so great, or his virtue as so spotless and perfect, or so steadfast, as that of Seneca. Now, this book of which I speak, to attain its end, gives a very contemptuous description of Seneca, having borrowed the strictures of the historian Dion,[1] to whose testimony I give no credit whatsoever; for besides his being inconsistent (since, after having sometimes called Seneca very wise, and again a mortal enemy of Nero's vices, he represents him elsewhere as avaricious, usurious, ambitious, cowardly, and sensual, and by false tokens counterfeiting the character of a philosopher), the virtue of Seneca appears so vivid and vigorous in his writings, and his defence in them about some of these imputations, as of his wealth and excessive expenditure, is so clear, that I should not believe any testimony to the contrary. And, furthermore, it is much more reasonable to believe, in such matters, the Roman historians than the Greeks and foreigners. Now, Tacitus[2] and the other Roman writers speak more honourably of his life and of his death, and describe him to us as in all respects a most excellent and most virtuous person. And I do not desire

[1] See Dion Cassius, LXI, 10, 12, 20, etc.

[2] See *Annals*, XIII, 1; XIV, 53, 54, 55; XV, 60, 64; Suetonius, *Life of Nero*.

to cast other blame on Dion's judgement than this, which is inevitable: that his perception about Roman affairs is so faulty that he dares to sustain the cause of Julius Cæsar against Pompeius, and that of Antonius against Cicero.[1]

Let us come to Plutarch. Jean Bodin is an excellent author of our day, and possesses much more judgement than the throng of scribblers of his time, and deserves to be estimated and examined. I find him a little bold in that passage of his *Methode de l'Histoire* in which he not only accuses Plutarch of ignorance,[2] — as to which I should let him say what he would,[3] for that is not for me to deal with, — but also says that this author often writes "incredible and wholly fabulous things" (these are his words). If he had said simply, "things other than they are," that would have been no great reprehension; for what we have not seen we take from the hands of others, and on trust; and I see that he purposely sometimes tells the same story in different ways; as, for instance, the opinion pronounced by Hannibal about the three greatest captains who ever were — it is in one wise in the Life of Flaminius, and otherwise in that of Pyrrhus. But to charge him with having taken for current coin incredible and impossible things is to accuse the most judicious author in the world of lack of judgement. And this is his example: "As when," so he says, "he narrates that a Lacedæmonian boy let his whole belly be torn by a fox-cub that he had stolen, and carried hidden under his garment till it killed him, rather than disclose his theft." [4] I think, in the first place, that this example is ill chosen, inasmuch as it is very difficult to set bounds to the strength of the faculties of the soul, while we have more ability to define and know the bodily powers; and for this reason, if I had been he, I should rather have chosen an example of the second kind; [5] and there are some of these lacking in credibility; as, amongst others, what he narrates of Pyrrhus — that, "severely wounded as he was, he dealt so great a sword-blow to an

[1] See Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem*, IV.

[2] See *Ibid.*

[3] In 1580 to 1588: *je ne me fusse pas mis en peine de le defendre.*

[4] See Bodin, *ubi supra;* the fact is taken from Plutarch's *Life of Lycurgus.*

[5] That is, regarding the bodily powers.

enemy armed at all points, that he cleft him from the top of his head to his feet, so that the body was divided into two parts." [1] In his example I see no great miracle; nor do I accept the excuse with which he shields Plutarch — that he added this phrase, "as they say," to warn us and curb our belief. For, unless about things accepted by authority and respect for antiquity or religion, he would not have been willing, either to accept himself, or to propose to us to believe, things in themselves incredible; and as to this phrase, "as they say," that he does not employ it in that place for this purpose is easy to see by what he himself relates to us elsewhere on this subject of the endurance of Lacedæmonian children: instances happening in his time, more difficult of belief; something to which Cicero also testified before him (as having been, as he says, on the spot): that even in their day there were children who, in the test of endurance to which they were subjected before the altar of Diana, bore being scourged until they were covered with blood, not only without crying out, but even without lamentation, and some even to the point of voluntarily yielding up their lives.[2] And what Plutarch also narrates,[3] together with a hundred other witnesses, that, during the ceremony of sacrifice, a glowing coal having fallen into the sleeve of a Lacedæmonian child while he was incensing, he let all his arm burn until the smell of the burnt flesh was perceived by the bystanders. According to their custom, there was nothing in which reputation was more concerned, or from which they had to suffer more blame and shame, than the being detected in theft. I am so impressed with the greatness of those men, that not only it does not seem to me, as to Bodin, that his [4] tale is incredible, but I do not even find it to be rare and extraordinary. (*c*) Spartan history is full of a thousand severer and rarer examples; it is all miraculous in this respect.[5] (*a*) Marcellinus reports, with regard to this matter of theft, that in his day there had not been found any kind of torture which

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Pyrrhus*.

[2] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 14; Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*.

[3] Not Plutarch, but Valerius Maximus, III, 3, *ext.* 1, of a *Macedonian* child.

[4] Plutarch's.

[5] *A ce prix.*

could force Egyptians detected in that crime, which was very common among them, to tell even their names.[1]

(*b*) A Spanish peasant,[2] being put to the question about the accomplices in the murder of the prætor Lucius Piso, cried out, in the midst of the torture, that his friends should not stir and should stay by him in perfect security; and that it was not in the power of pain to wrest from him a word of confession; and they got nothing else from him the first day. The next day, as they were bringing him back to renew the torture, tearing himself violently from the hands of his guards, he dashed his head against a wall, and so killed himself.[3] (*c*) Epicharis, having satiated and tired out the cruelty of Nero's officers, and endured fire and beatings and the rack for a whole day, without a word of betrayal of her fellow conspirators, being brought back to torture the next day, her limbs all crushed, she passed a lacing of her garment round an arm of her chair with a running knot, and thrusting therein her head, strangled herself by the weight of her body.[4] Having the spirit to die thus and to evade a renewal of the previous tortures, does it not seem that she deliberately lent her life to this proof of her endurance, in order to mock at that tyrant and to encourage others to like action against him?

(*a*) And whoever shall enquire of our troopers concerning their experiences in these civil wars will find instances of endurance, persistency, and firmness in these wretched times of ours, and in this rabble, more inert and effeminate than that of Egypt, worthy to be compared with those that we have narrated of Spartan valour. I know that there have been simple peasants who have let the soles of their feet be scorched, their finger-ends crushed with the hammer of a pistol, their bleeding eyes forced out of their heads by their brows being bound with a stout cord, before they chose even to be held for ransom. I have seen one of them left for dead perfectly naked in a ditch, his neck all bruised and swollen by a halter which still hung from it, by which they had

[1] See Ammianus Marcellinus, XXII, 16. 23.

[2] Montaigne now passes to examples of endurance in general, and, thence, of obstinacy.

[3] See Tacitus, *Annals*, IV, 45.

[4] See *Ibid.*, XV, 57.

dragged him all night at a horse's tail, his body pierced in a hundred places by dagger-thrusts, which had been dealt him, not to kill him, but to cause him pain and terror — who had endured all this, and even to having lost speech and feeling, being resolved, as he told me, rather to die a thousand deaths, — as, indeed, so far as suffering went, he had passed through a full one, — than to promise any thing; and yet he was one of the richest husbandmen in the whole region. How many of them have been seen to submit to be burnt and roasted for opinions borrowed from others, which they neither know nor understand!

(*b*) I have known hundreds of women, — for they say that Gascon heads have some preëminence in obstinacy, — whom you could more easily induce to take hold of hot iron than make them let go their hold of an opinion which they had formed in anger. They are exasperated by meeting with blows and compulsion. And he who devised the tale of the woman who, for no correction by threats and cudgelling, would cease calling her husband lousy, and who, having been thrown into the water, raised her hands above her head, even as she was choking, and made the motion of killing lice,[1] devised a tale in which, in very truth, we see the express image of the obstinacy of women. And obstinacy is the sister of constancy, at least in strength and firmness.

(*a*) We must not decide what is possible and what is not so by what is credible and incredible to our perceptions, as I have said elsewhere;[2] and it is a great mistake, and one which, nevertheless, the majority of men fall into (*c*) (this I do not say as regards Bodin), (*a*) to find it difficult to believe of others what they themselves could not do, (*c*) or would not. It seems to every man that the chief form of human nature is in himself; he tests all others by that, and refers them to it. The proceedings which do not resemble his are false and artificial.[3] What irrational stupidity!

[1] This tale is told in Poggi's *Facezie*, and is mentioned by Castiglione in the *Courtier*, III, 22.

[2] In Book I, chap. 27 (Vol. I, pp. 238–243).

[3] The edition of 1595 adds: *Luy propose l'on quelque chose des actions ou facultez d'un autre? La premiere chose qu'il appelle à la consultation de son jugement, c'est son exemple; selon qu'il en va chez luy, selon cela va l'ordre du monde.*

(*a*) For my own part, I regard some men as very far above me, notably among the ancients; and though I recognise clearly my inability to follow them with my steps, I do not fail to follow them with my eyes, and to imagine the impulses which so lift them up, (*c*) the seeds whereof I perceive in some degree in myself; as I do also those of the extreme baseness of men's minds, by which I am not astonished, and in which I do not disbelieve. I see clearly the contrivance that the others make use of [1] in order to ascend; (*a*) I admire their greatness; and those upward soarings that I find so excellent, I comprehend; and if my powers do not go so far, at least my judgement completely accepts them.

The other example that he [2] brings forward of "incredible and wholly fabulous" things told by Plutarch is that Agesilaus was fined by the Ephors for having attracted to himself alone the hearts and wills of his fellow citizens.[3] I know not what mark of falsity he finds in that; but it is evident that Plutarch speaks there of things which must have been much better known to him than to us; and it was no new thing in Greece to see men punished and exiled solely for being too popular with their fellow citizens — witness ostracism and petalism.

There is also, in this same book, another accusation which nettles me on Plutarch's account, where he says that he fairly paralleled Romans with Romans and Greeks with Greeks, but not Romans with Greeks — witness, he says, Demosthenes and Cicero, Cato and Aristides, Sylla and Lysander, Marcellus and Pelopidas, Pompeius and Agesilaus; deeming that he has favoured the Greeks in having given them mates so unequal.[4] This is really to attack what is most excellent and praiseworthy in Plutarch; for in his parallels (which are the most admirable portions of his works, and in which, in my opinion, he took much pleasure) the truth and sincerity of his judgements equals their depth and their weight. He is a philosopher who teaches us virtue. Let us see if we can defend him from this reproach of prevarication and falsity. What I think may have given rise to

[1] *Je vois bien le tour que celles là se donnent.*
[2] Bodin. [3] See the *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem.*
[4] See *Ibid.*

this judgement is the great and dazzling lustre of the Romans' names, as we see them. It does not seem to us that Demosthenes could equal the glory of a consul, proconsul, and quæstor of that great republic. But if the truth of the matter is considered, and the men in themselves, which Plutarch had more in mind, and the comparing of their characters, their natures, and their ability, rather than their fortune, I think, contrary to Bodin, that Cicero and the elder Cato come short of their mates.[1] For his [2] purpose, I should rather have chosen the example of the younger Cato compared with Phocion; for in that couple there might be found a more plausible inequality in favour of the Roman. As for Marcellus, Sylla, and Pompeius, I see clearly that their exploits in war are of larger scope, more renowned and stately [3] than those of the Greeks with whom Plato compares them; but the finest and bravest actions, in war as elsewhere, are not always the most famous. I often see the names of those who have been leaders dimmed by the lustre of other names of less merit — witness Labienus, Ventidius, Telesinus, and many others. And, considering him in that respect, if I had to complain on behalf of the Greeks, might I not say that much less is Camillus comparable to Themistocles, the Gracchi to Agis and Cleomenes, Numa to Lycurgus? [4] But it is folly to propose to pronounce with one stroke of the pen upon things of so many aspects. When Plutarch compares them, he does not, in consequence, make them equal. Who could note their differences more eloquently and conscientiously? In comparing the victories, the exploits of arms, and the power of the armies led by Pompeius, and his triumphs, with those of Agesilaus, "I do not believe," he says, "that Xenophon himself, were he living, although he were permitted to write all he pleased in favour of Agesilaus, would dare to put him in comparison." [5] In speaking of paralleling Lysander and Sylla, "There is no comparison," he says, "either in number of victories or in

[1] That is, of those with whom Plutarch compares them.

[2] Bodin's.

[3] *Plus enflez, glorieux, et pompeus.*

[4] In 1580 to 1588: *et Scipion encore à Epaminondas, qui estoyent aussi de son rolle.*

[5] That is, with Pompeius. See Plutarch, *Parallel between Pompeius and Agesilaus.*

fortune of battles; for Lysander won only two naval battles," etc.[1] This is not to steal any thing from the Romans: by simply bringing them and the Greeks together,[2] he can have put no affront upon them, whatever disparity there may be between them; and Plutarch does not counterpoise them in their entirety; he shows no preference in the mass; he compares the details and the circumstances, one after another, and judges them separately. Therefore, if it were desired to convict him of partiality, it would be necessary to examine carefully some special judgement, or to say, in general, that he mistook in matching a certain Greek with a certain Roman, because there were others among them better adapted for comparison and more resembling each other.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE STORY OF SPURINA

THIS is less the story of Spurina — "a young man of Tuscany," who does not appear till the last pages — than the story of the passion of love, with personal illustrations, derived from the experience of princes, philosophers, and potentates, chiefly from the life of Julius Cæsar, whose character is also considered in others of its aspects: so that this Essay may almost be considered as a prologue to the next one — on Cæsar as a *chef de guerre*.

The last two paragraphs are among the finest expressions of Montaigne's *beautiful* "good sense." They were added in 1595.

PHILOSOPHY does not think that she has made an ill use of her resources when she has given over to the reason the supreme mastery of our soul, and the authority to hold our appetites in check. Those who judge that there is among them none more violent than those to which love gives birth have this support for their belief — that those have hold of both body and soul, and that the whole man is possessed by them, in such wise that even the health is dependent on them, and medicine is sometimes compelled to do them service as a pander. But, on the other hand, it might also be said that the commixture

[1] See Plutarch, *Parallel between Sylla and Lysander.*

[2] *Pour les avoir simplement presentez aux Grecs.*

of the body causes abatement and weakening in them; for such desires are subject to satiety and susceptible to material remedies. Plusieurs, ayans voulu delivrer leurs ames des alarmes continuelles que leur donnoit cet appetit, se sont servis d'incision et destranchement des parties esmeues et alterees. D'autres en ont du tout abatu la force et l'ardeur par frequente application de choses froides, comme de neige et de vinaigre. The sackcloths of our ancestors were used for this purpose; it is a fabric woven of horsehair, of which some wove shirts and others waist-bands to cause them suffering.[1] A prince told me not long ago that in his youth, on a day of solemn ceremony at the court of King Francis the First, when everybody was fitly habited, the fancy seized him to put on his father's hair-shirt, which is still in his possession; but, devout as he was, he could not muster the endurance to wait till night to take it off, and he was made ill by it for a long time; he added that he did not believe that there is any youthful ardour so vehement that the use of that prescription can not deaden it; perchance, however, he has not experienced the most stinging sort; for experience shows us that such emotion very often endures under rough and rude garments, and that hair-shirts do not always make those chaste who wear them.[2] Xenocrates y proceda plus rigoureusement: car ses disciples, pour essayer sa continence, luy ayant fourré dans son lict Laïs, cette belle et fameuse courtisane, toute nue, sauf les armes de sa beauté et folastres apasts, ses philtres, sentant qu'en despit de ses discours et de ses regles, le corps, revesche, commençoit à se mutiner, il se fit bruler les membres qui avoient presté l'oreille à cette rebellion.[3] Whereas the passions which wholly reside in the soul, as ambition, avarice, and others, give much more work to the reason; for there it can be aided only by its own resources, nor are these appetites capable of satiety; indeed, they are whetted and increased by enjoyment.

The single example of Julius Cæsar will suffice to show us

[1] *A gener leurs reins.*

[2] *Et que les haires ne rendent pas tousjours heres ceux qui les portent.*

[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Xenocrates;* the story is told a little differently in Valerius Maximus, IV, 3, *ext.* 3.

the disparity of these appetites; for never was man more addicted to amorous pleasures. Evidence whereof is the scrupulous care he took of his person, making use of the most elaborate [1] methods then employed, even to the point of having the hairs of his body pulled out, and being anointed with perfumes of extreme delicacy.[2] And he was by nature of fine appearance — fair, tall, and lithe in figure, full in the face, his eyes brown and expressive, if we are to believe Suetonius; for the statues of him to be seen at Rome do not quite resemble this description in all points. Besides his wives, whom he changed four times, to say nothing of his youthful relations with Nicomedes, King of Bithynia,[3] he had the maidenhead of the so greatly renowned Queen of Egypt, Cleopatra — witness the little Cæsarion, who was born of their commerce.[4] He paid court also to Eunoe, Queen of Mauretania,[5] and at Rome to Posthumia, wife of Servius Sulpitius, to Lolla, wife of Gabinius, to Tertulla, wife of Crassus, and even to Mutia, wife of the great Pompeius; [6] which was the reason, say the Roman historians, that her husband repudiated her; [7] as to which Plutarch confesses his ignorance; and the Curios, father and son, afterward reproached Pompeius when he married Cæsar's daughter, that he made himself son-in-law to a man who had made him cuckold, and whom he himself was wont to call Ægisthus.[8] Besides all these, he had for mistress Servilia, sister of Cato and mother of Marcus Brutus, whence, every one believes, proceeded that great affection he bore to Brutus, who was born at a time when there was a probability that he had begotten him.[9] So that I have reason, it seems to me, to take him for a man extremely addicted to this form of debauchery and of a very amorous complexion. But the other passion, ambition, by which also he was endlessly moved, when it came into contention with this, immediately forced it to give place.

[1] *Lascifs.*
[2] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*
[3] See *Ibid.*
[4] See Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar.*
[5] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*
[6] See *Ibid.*
[7] See *Ibid.*, Beroald's *Commentary.*
[8] See *Ibid.* Ægisthus was the lover of Clytemnestra and murderer of Agamemnon.
[9] See *Ibid.*, Beroald's *Commentary.*

(*c*) In this connection, remembering Mechmet,[1] him who subjected Constantinople, and brought about the final extermination of the name of Greece, I know not in whom these two passions can be found more evenly balanced: an equally indefatigable debauchee and soldier. But when they come into his life concurrently, one with the other, the contentious eagerness always imperiously curbs the amorous eagerness. And the latter, though beyond its natural season, does not fully regain supreme authority until he reaches extreme old age, incapable of sustaining longer the burden of wars. That which, as a contrary instance, is told of Ladislas, King of Naples, is worthy of note — that, although he was an excellent soldier, brave and ambitious, he proposed to himself, as the principal aim of his ambition, the consummation of his sensuality and the possession of one and another peculiarly beautiful woman. His death was of the same character. Having by a well-directed siege brought the city of Florence to such straits that the people were ready to compound for his victory, he gave them quittance on condition that they should deliver to him a maiden of their city of whose surpassing beauty he had heard. They had no choice but to give her up to him, and avoid public ruin by a private wrong. She was the daughter of a physician famous in his day, who, finding himself in so hateful a necessity, resolved upon an attempt of high courage.[2] As every one joined in adorning his daughter and bedecking her with ornaments and jewels which would make her charming to this new lover, he also, himself, gave her a handkerchief of exquisite odour and workmanship, which she should make use of at their first meeting, it being an article they never were without in those regions. This handkerchief, filled with poison by the skill of his art, being rubbed against their warm flesh and opened pores, so quickly infused the poison that they expired in one another's arms.[3]

[1] Mohammed II.

[2] *Une haute entreprise.*

[3] See Chalcondylas, V, 11. The same anecdote is found in several historical works of the time: Lavardin's *Histoire de Scanderbeg*, the History of Paul Jovius, etc.; but Montaigne's version was probably based upon Chalcondylas.

I come back to Cæsar. (*a*) His pleasures never caused him to lose a single minute of the hour, or to turn aside one step from the opportunities that offered themselves for his aggrandisement. This passion [1] in him dominated so masterfully all others, and possessed his soul with authority so absolute, that it carried him wherever it would. Truly I am troubled by this, when I consider the greatness of this personage in all else, and the marvellous faculties that were in him — so much sufficiency in every sort of knowledge that there is almost no branch of learning of which he has not written. He was such an orator that many have ranked his eloquence higher than that of Cicero; and he himself, in my judgement, did not think that he fell short of him in that particular.[2] And his two *Anti-Catos* were written chiefly to counterbalance the admirable style that Cicero had employed in his *Cato*.[3] For the rest, was there ever a soul so vigilant, so active, and so enduring of hard work as his? And unquestionably it was embellished, too, by many rare seeds of virtue — living and natural, I mean, and not counterfeited. He was unusually sober, and so far from dainty in his eating that Oppius narrates that one day, there having been put before him at table some sauce of prepared oil, instead of pure oil, he ate freely of it, in order not to shame his host.[4] Another time he had his baker whipped for having supplied him with different bread from that of the common people.[5] Cato himself was wont to say of him that he was the first sober man who ever wended his way toward the ruin of his country.[6] And as to this same Cato calling him one day a drunkard, it happened in this wise. Both of them being in the Senate, where there was talk of the conspiracy of Catiline, about which Cæsar was suspected, there was brought to him from outside, secretly, a letter. Cato, believing that it was some warning from the conspirators, called upon him to give it to him; which Cæsar was obliged to do, to avoid more serious suspicion. It chanced to be a love letter, which Servilia, Cato's sister, had written to him.

[1] Ambition. [2] *N'estimoit luy devoir guere en cette partie.*
[3] See Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar.*
[4] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*
[5] See *Ibid.* [6] See *Ibid.*

Cato, having read it, threw it back to him, saying: "Take it, drunkard!" [1] This, I say, was rather a word of contempt and anger than an express accusation of that vice; as often we insult those who anger us, with the first insulting words that come to our tongue, although they are in no wise deserved by those to whom we apply them. Moreover, this vice of which Cato accuses him is closely akin to that in which he had surprised Cæsar; for Venus and Bacchus readily go in company, as the proverb has it. (*b*) But in my own case Venus is much more active when accompanied by sobriety.

(*a*) The examples of his mildness and his clemency toward those who had offended him are innumerable; [2] I mean, besides those he gave while the civil war was still in progress, which he himself shows clearly in his writings that he made use of to cajole his enemies and make them less dread his future power and victory. And it must be said that these examples, if they are not sufficient to testify to a natural mildness, exhibit at least in this personage a marvellous confidence and greatness of heart. It often befell him to send back whole armies to the enemy after he had vanquished them, without deigning even to bind them by an oath, if not to favour him, at least to restrain themselves from making war upon him. He took prisoner certain officers of Pompeius three and four times, and as often set them at liberty.[3] Pompeius declared all those who did not follow him in war to be his enemies; and he [4] proclaimed that he regarded as friends those who did not stir and who did not actually take arms against him.[5] To those of his officers who secretly left him to take other service, he sent, moreover, their arms and horses and equipment.[6] The towns that he had taken by force he left at liberty to follow such course as they pleased, giving them no other garrison than the memory of his mildness and clemency. On the day of his

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Cato of Utica.*
[2] Cf. Book I, chap. 24 (Vol. I, p. 175).
[3] See Cæsar, *De Bello Civili*, I, 24; III, 10.
[4] Cæsar.
[5] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*
[6] Plutarch says this expressly of Labienus, in the *Life of Cæsar.*

great battle at Pharsalia, he forbade hands to be laid on Roman citizens except at the utmost need.[1]

These were very hazardous proceedings, in my judgement; and it is no wonder if, in the civil wars which we are in the midst of, those who, like him, are assailing the ancient constitution of their country do not in such ways imitate his example. They are extraordinary methods, which it belongs only to Cæsar's fortune and his wonderful foresight to conduct to a happy result. When I consider the incomparable grandeur of this soul, I excuse Victory for having been unable to disengage herself from him, even in that most unjust and most iniquitous cause.[2]

To return to his clemency, we have several genuine examples of it in the day of his power, when, all things being given into his hands, he had no longer reason for dissimulation. Caius Memmius had written very sharp discourses against him, to which he had replied with great bitterness; yet he did not hesitate, very soon after, to assist in making him consul.[3] Caius Calvus, who had made many offensive epigrams against him, having employed some friends of his to bring about a reconciliation, Cæsar prevailed upon himself to write first to him. And our friend Catullus, who had so rudely handled him under the name of Mamurra, coming to him to excuse himself, Cæsar had him sup at his table that same day. Having been told of some persons who spoke ill of him, he did no more than declare, in a public speech, that he had been informed about them. He feared his enemies even less than he hated them. Certain conspiracies and gatherings that were formed against his life having been revealed to him, he contented himself with publishing, by an edict, that they were known to him, without otherwise prosecuting the originators of them. As for the consideration he had for his friends, when Caius Oppius was travelling with him and was taken ill, he gave up to him the only lodging he had, and lay all night on the ground and

[1] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar*.

[2] This sentence appears, almost word for word, on the fly-leaf of Montaigne's copy of Cæsar.

[3] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar*, for this example and all those that follow, down to the anecdote of Spurina.

in the open air. As for his justice, he put to death one of his personal attendants whom he especially loved, for having made love to the wife of a Roman knight, although no one made complaint about it. Never did man bring more moderation to victory or more resolution to adverse fortune.

But all these good inclinations were altered and stifled by his madly ambitious disposition, by which he let himself be so carried away that we may easily maintain that it held the helm and the rudder of all his actions. Of an open-handed man it made a public thief, to minister to this profusion and bounty, and led him to utter that vile and very unreasonable saying, that, if the most wicked and disgraced men in the world had been faithful to him in serving his aggrandisement, he would cherish them and advance them to the utmost of his power as readily as the most worthy people. He was so intoxicated by extreme vanity that he dared to pride himself in the presence of his fellow citizens upon having made that great Roman republic a name without form or body, and to declare that what he said should thereafter have the force of laws, and to receive seated the Senate when it came before him, and to allow himself to be adored, and divine honours to be paid him in his presence. In short, that single vice, in my opinion, destroyed in him the finest and richest nature that ever was, and has rendered his memory detestable to all worthy people, forasmuch as he chose to seek his glory in the ruin of his country and the subversion of the most powerful and flourishing commonwealth that the world will ever see.

There might easily be found, on the other hand, many examples of great men whom debauchery has caused to neglect the conduct of their affairs, as Marcus Antonius and others; but where love and ambition are equally balanced, and come into collision with equal forces, I make no doubt that the latter would win the prize of mastery.

Now, to return to my former path,[1] it is much to be able to curb our appetite by the process of reason, or to compel our members, by force, to keep themselves to their duty; but to scourge ourselves for the benefit of our neighbours, and not only to divest ourselves of that gentle perturbation

[1] *Pour me remettre sur mes brisées.*

which flatters us by the pleasure that we feel in seeing that we are agreeable to others and loved and sought by every one, but to conceive even hatred and loathing for our charms which are the cause of this, and to condemn our beauty because some one else is inflamed by it — of this I have seen scarcely any examples. Here is one: Spurina, a young man of Tuscany, —

(*b*) Qualis gemma micat, fulvum quæ dividit aurum,
Aut collo decus aut capiti, vel quale, per artem
Inclusum buxo aut Oricia terebintho,
Lucet ebur,[1] —

(*a*) being endowed with unusual beauty, so excessive that the most chaste eyes could not chastely abide its lustre, not content with leaving without furtherance all the fever and fire that he kindled everywhere, entered into violent anger against himself and against these rich gifts that Nature had bestowed upon him, — as if a man were responsible for the fault of others, — and splashed and marred, by dint of wounds deliberately self-inflicted, and scars, the perfect proportion and regularity which Nature had so carefully observed in his face.[2] (*c*) To express my opinion about this, I wonder at such acts more than I honour them; excesses like this are hostile to my precepts. The design was good and right-minded, but, in my opinion, a little lacking in discretion. What if his ugliness resulted afterward in causing others to fall into the sin of contempt and hatred? or of envy of the glory of so unusual a ground for commendation? or of calumny, attributing this frame of mind to a mad ambition? Is there any subject from which vice may not derive, if it will, opportunity to come into play in some way? It would have been more reasonable, and also more praiseworthy, had he made those gifts of God a subject of exemplary virtue and of discipline.

Those who evade the common duties and that infinite number of thorny rules, with so many faces, which bind a man of scrupulous integrity in civil life, make, to my think-

[1] As glitters a precious stone set in yellow gold, a neck or head ornament; or as ivory gleams, skilfully mounted in ebony or Orician terebinth. — Virgil, *Æneid*, X, 134.

[2] See Valerius Maximus, IV, 5, *ext.* 1.

ing, a fine saving,[1] whatever degree of special rigour they impose upon themselves. It is, in a sense, dying to avoid the trouble of living worthily. They may win another reward; but the reward for difficulty it has never seemed to me they could have; nor can I see that there is any thing harder than holding oneself erect amid the floods of the crowded world, loyally answering to and satisfying all the parts of one's office. It is, perchance, easier to do without the sex altogether, than to comport oneself properly in all points in companionship with one's wife; and we are able to slip along less carefully in poverty than in rightly expended abundance. Enjoyment, guided by reason, is more difficult than abstention. The right living of the younger Scipio has a thousand aspects; that of Diogenes has only one. This [2] as much surpasses ordinary lives in innocence as choice and accomplished lives surpass it in usefulness and in strength.

CHAPTER XXXIV

OBSERVATIONS ON JULIUS CÆSAR'S METHODS OF MAKING WAR

We have had in the preceding chapter some expression of Montaigne's ardent and very interesting admiration for Julius Cæsar. This admiration is another proof, I think, of an excitable love of action dormant in Montaigne himself, checked and chilled all his life by a certain physical indolence, and by the subtlety of his intellectual judgements and the elevation of his spiritual moods; or, in a word, by the absence in his nature of any ambition for *power*. Of his unfailing admiration for men of action there is evidence again, and very convincing, in chapter 36 of this book — the Essay, "Of the Most Eminent Men." If he does not admit Cæsar to be as great as Alexander, and consequently one of the three greatest men in the world, he says that he could hardly *not* do so, and that the balance was heavier on the side of Alexander solely because the final result of the ambition of Cæsar was the ruin of his country. This seemed to Montaigne more a fatal misfortune than the fault of Cæsar, but still fatal to his supreme glory.

The present Essay is again of interest as one of those that evince Montaigne's familiarity with military affairs, and his interest in them. It can not be too often repeated that Montaigne was not, primarily, a

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[1] *Font . . . une belle espargne.* [2] That is, the life of Diogenes.

"man of letters." *Je suis moins faiseur de livres, que de nulle aultre besogne*, he himself says.

It may be noted that the edition of 1595 makes but very slight changes and additions in this Essay.

IT is told of several famous warriors that they held certain books in special regard: as the great Alexander, Homer;[1] (*c*) Scipio Africanus, Xenophon;[2] (*a*) Marcus Brutus, Polybius;[3] Charles V, Philippe de Commines;[4] and it is said that, in these days, Machiavelli is still, in another quarter, in repute; but the late Marshal Strozzi, who for his part chose Cæsar, did unquestionably choose much better: for in truth that book ought to be the breviary of every warrior, as being the true and supreme pattern of the military art. And God knows with what charm and what beauty he[5] also adorned that rich material, with a style so pure, so delicate, and so perfect, that to my taste there are no writings in the world which are comparable to his in this respect. I purpose to set down here certain peculiar and unusual qualities in the carrying on of his wars, which have remained in my memory.

His army being somewhat alarmed by the report that was current of the great forces that King Juba was bringing against him, instead of decrying the idea that his soldiers had conceived of this, and belittling the resources of his enemy, having called them together, to reassure them and give them courage, he took a course altogether contrary to that to which we are accustomed; for he told them that they need no longer put themselves to the trouble of enquiring about the forces led by the enemy, for he had had very certain information about them; and then he told them the numbers, going far beyond both the truth and the report about them that was current in his army;[6] following the counsel of Cyrus in Xenophon;[7] forasmuch as delusion is not so important if the enemy is found to be weaker than

[1] Cf. Book II, chap. 36 (p. 186, *infra*).

[2] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 26.

[3] See Plutarch, *Life of Brutus*.

[4] See Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem*, Proœmium.

[5] Cæsar.

[6] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar*.

[7] See *Ibid.*, Beroald's *Commentary;* Xenophon, *Cyropædeia*, VI, 3.

had been looked for, as when, having from common report believed him to be weak, he is found later to be, in truth, very strong.

He accustomed his soldiers, above all things else, to obey simply, without entering into criticism or talk of the plans of their commander, which he communicated to them only on the point of execution; and it gave him pleasure, if any part of his designs had been discovered by them, to change his mind instantly, in order to deceive them; and often, to this end, having assigned some place for his night's quarters, he went beyond it and lengthened the day's march, particularly if it were bad weather and rainy.[1]

The Swiss, at the beginning of his wars in Gaul, having sent to him to give them passage through territory of the Romans, he, having determined to prevent them by force, nevertheless counterfeited a friendly disposition, and delayed some days before replying to them, in order to make use of that interval to assemble his army. Those unfortunate people did not know how excellent a manager of time this man was: for he often repeats that the highest quality of a commander is knowing how to seize opportunities on the instant, and to use speed, which, in truth, in his exploits is unheard of and incredible in degree.

If he was not very scrupulous in this, the taking advantage of his enemy under colour of a truce, he was as little so in demanding in his soldiers no other virtues than valour; nor did he punish severely any other vices than mutiny and disobedience. Often, after his victories, he turned them loose for every sort of license, dispensing them for some time from the rules of military discipline; boasting that he had soldiers so well trained that, even when all perfumed and anointed, they did not fail to enter furiously into battle. In truth, he liked them to be richly armed, and made them wear graven armour, gilded and silvered, so that care for its preservation might make them more eager to defend themselves.[2] In speaking to them he called them companions,[3] which name we still use; a practice which Augustus his successor abolished, believing that he[4] had done it

[1] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*
[2] See *Ibid.*
[3] See *Ibid.*
[4] Cæsar.

upon the necessity of his affairs and to flatter the spirit of those who followed him only as volunteers,[1] —

(*b*) Rheni mihi Cæsar in undis
Dux erat, hic socius; facinus quos inquinat, æquat;[2]

(*a*) but that this style was too mild and familiar[3] for the dignity of an emperor and general of an army; and he brought back the practice of calling them soldiers, simply. With this courteousness, however, Cæsar combined great severity in holding them in restraint. The ninth legion having mutinied near Placentia, he cashiered it ignominiously, although Pompeius was then still on foot; and received it into favour only after many supplications. He quieted them more by authority and by audacity than by mildness.[4]

Where he speaks of his crossing the river Rhine into Germany, he says that, deeming it unbefitting the honour of the Roman people that he should take his army across in boats, he had a bridge built, that it might cross with steady footing.[5] It was there that he built that wonderful bridge of which he explains to us the construction in detail; for he does not dwell so long upon any part of his deeds as he does in describing to us the ingenuity of his inventions in manual works of this kind.[6]

I have observed this also, that he regards as of much importance his exhortations to the soldiers before battle: for when he desires to show that he was taken by surprise or was hurried, he always remarks that he had not even time to address his army. Before that great battle against the forces of Tournay,[7] "Cæsar," he says, "having given his orders, quickly hastened wherever chance led him, to exhort his troops; and, falling in with the tenth legion, he had not time to say any thing to them save that they must bear in

[1] See Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*.

[2] At the passage of the Rhine, Cæsar was my general; here he is my associate; crime places on the same level those whom it dishonours. — Lucan, V, 289.

[3] *Trop rabaissée.*

[4] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar*.

[5] See Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, IV, 17.

[6] Cf. Book I, chap. 17 (Vol. I, p. 93).

[7] The Nervi. See Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, II, 21.

mind their accustomed valour, that they must not be dismayed, and must sustain bravely the onset of their adversaries; and, because the enemy had already approached within bow-shot, he gave the signal for battle; and thence going quickly elsewhere, to encourage others, he found that they were already fighting." This is what he says in that place. In truth, his tongue did him many times very notable service; and even in his own day his military eloquence was in such repute that many in his army collected his harangues; and by this means volumes were made of them, which existed a long while after his death. His style has peculiar graces, so that his friends, and among others Augustus, hearing his speeches read, distinguished even to sentences and words what was not his.

The first time that he left Rome on a public mission, he arrived in eight days at the river Rhone, having in his coach, in front of him, a secretary or two, who wrote incessantly, and behind him his sword-bearer.[1] And certainly, if it were a matter of travelling only,[2] it would be difficult to attain the celerity with which, always victorious, having left Gaul, and following Pompeius to Brindisi in eighteen days, he subdued Italy, returned from Brindisi to Rome, from Rome went into the very heart of Spain, where he surmounted extreme difficulties in the war against Affranius and Petreius, and in the long siege of Marseilles. Thence he turned to Macedonia, beat the Roman army at Pharsalia, thence, pursuing Pompeius, passed into Egypt, which he subdued; from Egypt he went into Syria and the territories of Pontus, where he fought Pharnaces; thence into Africa, where he defeated Scipio and Juba, and returned again through Italy to Spain, where he defeated the sons of Pompeius, —

(*b*) Ocior et cœli flammis et tigride fœta.[3]

Ac veluti montis saxum de vertice præceps
Cum ruit avulsum vento, seu turbidus imber
Proluit, aut annis solvit sublapsa vetustas,

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar.* [2] *Quand on ne feroit qu'aller.*
[3] Swifter than lightning from the sky, or the tigress with young. — Lucan, V, 405.

Fertur in abruptum magno mons improbus actu,
Exultatque solo, silvas, armenta virosque
Involvens secum.[1]

(*a*) Speaking of the siege of Avaricum, he says that it was his custom to remain night and day near the workmen whom he was employing.[2] In every undertaking of importance he always made the investigation himself, and never led his army into a place which he had not first reconnoitred.[3] And, if we believe Suetonius, when he undertook to ferry across to England, he led in exploring the way.[4] He was wont to say that he liked better the victory which was brought on by judgement than by force. And in the war against Petreius and Affranius, when fortune offered him a very manifest occasion of advantage, he refused it, hoping, he says, to get the better of his enemies with a little more delay, but less risk.[5] (*b*) There, too, he did a wonderful thing in ordering his whole host, without any necessity, to swim across the river;

rapuitque ruens in prœlia miles,
Quod fugiens timuisset, iter; mox uda receptis
Membra fovent armis, gelidosque a gurgite, cursu
Restituunt artus.[6]

(*a*) I find him a little more restrained and deliberate in his enterprises than Alexander; for the latter seems to seek out and give hot chase to dangers, like an impetuous torrent, which rushes on without heed and without choice, assaulting all that it encounters.

[1] And like a rock precipitated from the top of a mountain, wrenched from its place by the wind, or loosened by a stormy rain, or detached by the passage of years, its enormous mass falls down with a great rush, and bounds over the earth, dragging with it trees and flocks and men. — Virgil, *Æneid*, XII, 684.

[2] See Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, VII, 24.

[3] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar*.

[4] *Il fut le premier à sonder le gué.* See *Ibid.*

[5] See Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, I, 72.

[6] And the soldier rushing to the fight hurriedly takes the road that in flight he would have feared; quickly his wet limbs regain warmth, with his newly-taken-on armour, and, by running, his members, frozen by the sea-water, are restored to life. — Lucan, IV, 151.

(*b*) Sic tauri-formis volvitur Aufidus,
Qui regna Dauni perfluit Appuli,
Dum sævit, horrendamque cultis
Diluviem meditatur agris.[1]

(*a*) Also he was about his work in the prime and first vehemence of his age, while Cæsar began his when already mature and well advanced in years. Moreover, Alexander was of a more sanguine temperament, choleric and ardent, and also inflamed that temperament by wine, about which Cæsar was very abstinent;[2] but when occasions of necessity presented themselves, or when the matter required it, never was there a man who held his life more cheaply. For my own part, it seems to me that I can read in many of his exploits a fixed resolution to be killed, in order to escape the shame of being vanquished. In the great battle that he fought against those of Tournay, seeing the van of his own army wavering, he ran to show himself in front of his enemies, without a shield, just as he was;[3] which befell him many other times. Hearing that his troops were surrounded, he passed in disguise through the hostile army in order to strengthen his men by his presence.[4] Having crossed to Dyrrachium with a very small force, and seeing that the rest of his army, which he had left to the conduct of Antonius, was slow in following him, he undertook alone to repass the sea in a very violent storm, and stole away to resume command of the rest of his forces, the harbours on the other side and the whole sea being in the possession of Pompeius.[5] And as for the enterprises that he achieved by force of arms, there are many that exceed in risk all judgement formed from military calculation; for with what feeble resources did he undertake to subdue the kingdom of Egypt, and afterward to attack the forces of Scipio and Juba, ten

[1] So rolls the two-horned Aufidus, which waters the realms of Apulian Daunus, when it rages and threatens the tilled fields with a dreadful deluge. — Horace, *Odes*, IV, 14.25.

[2] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*

[3] See Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, II, 25.

[4] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*

[5] See *Ibid.;* Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar;* Appian, *Civil War*, II; Dion Cassius, XLI, 46; Lucan, V, 519.

times greater than his own! Such men have had I know not what of more than human confidence in their fortune.

(*b*) And he said that high enterprises should be executed, not pondered.[1] (*a*) After the battle of Pharsalia, having sent his army in advance into Asia, and crossing the strait of the Hellespont with a single vessel, he fell in at sea with Lucius Cassius with ten great war-vessels; he had the courage, not simply to await him, but to make straight for him, and summon him to surrender; and he was successful.[2] Having undertaken that mad siege of Alesia, where there were eighty thousand men defending it, all Gaul having risen to come down upon him and raise the siege, and having in the field an army of a hundred and nine thousand horse [3] and two hundred and forty thousand foot, what intrepidity and insane confidence there was in choosing not to abandon his enterprise but to disperse at one and the same time two such great obstacles! However, he surmounted them; and after winning that great battle against those outside, he very soon brought to his mercy those whom he held shut up. The same thing happened to Lucullus at the siege of Tigranocerta against King Tigranes, but with unlike conditions, when we consider the lack of energy in the enemies with whom Lucullus had to do.[4]

I desire here to note two unusual and extraordinary occurrences in regard to that siege of Alesia: one, that the Gauls, when assembling to go to meet Cæsar, having made an enumeration of all their forces, determined in their council to cut off a good part of that great multitude, lest they might in consequence fall into confusion.[5] This instance is something strange — to be afraid of being too numerous; but, on reflection, it is very probable that the body of an army should be of moderate size and determined by certain limits, whether because of the difficulty of feeding it, or because of the difficulty of handling it and keeping it in order. At least, it would be easy to prove by examples that armies

[1] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.

[2] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar*.

[3] Cæsar wrote 8000: *Coactus equitum IIX millibus et peditum circa CCXL*. See *De Bello Gallico*, VII, 76.

[4] See Plutarch, *Life of Lucullus*.

[5] See Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, VII, 75.

monstrous in number have seldom done any thing worth while. (*c*) According to what Cyrus says, in Xenophon, it is not the number of men, but the number of brave men, that gives the advantage, the remainder serving rather as a hindrance than a help.[1] And Bajazet based his determination to give battle to Tamburlane, against the advice of all his officers, principally on the fact that the innumerable number of his enemy's men gave him assured hope of confusion amongst them.[2] Scanderbeg, an excellent judge, and of much experience, was wont to say that ten or twelve thousand reliable fighting men should suffice a competent commander to secure his reputation in every sort of military business.[3]

(*a*) The other point,[4] which seems to be opposed both to custom and to good judgement in war, is that Vercingetorix, who was named as head and general of all the factions of the rebellious Gauls, adopted the course of shutting himself up in Alesia.[5] For he who commands a whole country should never enter a fortress [6] except in case of such extremity that his last stronghold is at stake, and that there is nothing more to hope for except in its defence; otherwise, he should keep himself at liberty, in order to be able to look after all parts of his government in general.

To return to Cæsar — he became with time a little more deliberate and more given to examination, as his friend Oppius testifies; considering that he should not rashly risk the honour of so many victories which a single mischance might cause him to lose.[7] This is what the Italians mean when they point out that hare-brained boldness which we observe in young men, calling them beggars for honour — *bisognosi d'honore;* and say that, when they are still in so great hunger and dearth of renown, they have reason to seek it at whatever cost; which those should not do, who have already acquired a sufficiency of it. There can be some just moderation in this desire for glory, and some satiety in this appe-

[1] See Xenophon, *Cyropædeia*, II, 2.
[2] See Chalcondylas, III, 11.
[3] See Lavardin, *Histoire de Scanderbeg*.
[4] That is, the other of the two "extraordinary occurrences."
[5] See Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, VII, 68.
[6] *Ne se doit jamais engager*.
[7] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar*.

tite, as in others; many people so deal with it. He [1] was far removed from the scruples [2] of the ancient Romans, who desired to get the better in their wars only by virtue of simple and natural valour; but still he brought thereto more conscience than we should to-day, and he did not approve of all sorts of means of obtaining the victory. In the war against Ariovistus, as he was parleying with him, there arose some commotion between the two armies, which began through the fault of the cavalry of Ariovistus. Upon this disturbance, Cæsar found himself in a position of great advantage over his enemy; but he did not choose to benefit by it, for fear that he might be charged with having acted disloyally.[3] He was accustomed to wear, when fighting, rich apparel and of brilliant colour, so as to attract attention to himself. He held the reins the tighter with his soldiers and restrained them the more, when near the enemy.[4]

When the ancient Greeks wished to accuse any one of extreme incompetence, they would say, in a common proverb, that he could neither read nor swim. He had this same opinion, that the art of swimming was very useful in war, and he found several conveniences in it: if he had to make haste, he ordinarily crossed by swimming the rivers that were in the way; for he liked to travel on foot like the great Alexander.[5] In Egypt, being obliged, in order to save himself, to get into a little boat, and so many people having leaped into it with him that he was in danger of going to the bottom, he chose to jump into the sea, and by swimming reached his fleet, which was more than two hundred paces [6] distant, holding his tablets out of the water in his left hand and eagerly dragging after him [7] his coat-armour, in order that the enemy might not obtain it; and he was already well advanced in years.[8] Never was a commander so much in favour with his soldiers; at the beginning of his civil wars

[1] That is, Cæsar. [2] *Cette religion.*

[3] See Cæsar, *De Bello Gallico*, I, 46.

[4] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*

[5] See *Ibid.*

[6] *Pas.* Cotgrave defines *pas* as "a measure of two and a half feet; or (as in some places) three and a half; or (as among the Romans) five."

[7] *Trainant à belles dents.*

[8] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*

the centurions offered to keep in pay, each from his own purse, a man-at-arms; and the foot-soldiers, to serve him at their own expense, those who were the most well-to-do undertaking also to bear all charges of the most needy.[1] The late admiral de Chatillon [2] offered us recently a similar case in our civil wars; for the Frenchmen in his army supplied from their purses the payment of the foreigners who joined him. There would scarcely be found examples of good-will so warm and so ready among those who walk in the old way,[3] under the long-continued government of the laws.

(*c*) Passion commands us much more vigorously than reason. It did, however, occur in the war against Hannibal that, following the example of the liberality of the Roman people in the city, the soldiers and officers refused their pay; and in the camp of Marcellus they called those who took it mercenaries.[4]

(*a*) When he [5] was worsted near Dyrrachium, his soldiers came voluntarily to offer themselves to be blamed and punished, so that he had rather to console them than to taunt them.[6] A single cohort of his held out more than four hours against four of Pompeius's legions, until it was almost completely destroyed by bow-shots; and a hundred and thirty thousand arrows were found in the entrenchments.[7] A soldier named Scæva, who commanded at one of the entrances to the fortification, held his ground unflinchingly while an eye was put out, the shoulder and thigh pierced, and his shield struck in two hundred and thirty places.[8] It fell out with many of his [9] soldiers who were taken prisoners, that they chose to accept death rather than promise to join the other side. Granius Petronius being captured by Scipio in Africa, Scipio, having put to death his companions, sent

[1] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*

[2] Gaspard de Coligny, assassinated in the Massacre of Saint Bartholomew, 1572.

[3] That is, *dans le camp des catholiques* (M. Villey).

[4] See Livy, XXIV, 18.

[5] Cæsar.

[6] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar;* Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar.*

[7] See Suetonius, *Life of Cæsar.*

[8] See *Ibid.*

[9] Cæsar's. See *Ibid.*

word to him that he gave him his life, for he was a man of rank and a quæstor. Petronius replied that the soldiers of Cæsar were accustomed to grant life to others, not to receive it; and immediately killed himself with his own hands.[1]

There are innumerable examples of their fidelity. Nor should the story be forgotten of those who were besieged at Salona, — a city that took sides with Cæsar against Pompeius, — because an extraordinary occurrence happened there. Marcus Octavius held them besieged; those who were within the walls were reduced to extreme need of every thing, to that degree that, to make up for their lack of men, — the greater number of them being dead or wounded, — they had set free all their slaves, and for the use of their machines they had been compelled to cut off the hair of all the women, to make ropes of it — in addition to an incredible dearth of provisions; this notwithstanding, they were resolved never to surrender. After the siege had dragged along for a great while, whence Octavius had become more careless and less attentive to his undertaking, they, on a chosen day, about noon, having first arranged the women and children on the walls to make a good show, issued forth so furiously on the besiegers that, having routed the first and second and third outer posts,[2] and the fourth, and then all the rest, and having compelled the complete abandonment of the entrenchments, they pursued them even to their ships; and Octavius himself fled to Dyrrachium, where Pompeius was.[3] I do not remember at this moment to have seen any other instance where the besieged fought the whole force of the besiegers and gained possession of the field, nor one in which a sortie brought about pure and complete victory in battle.

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Cæsar*.
[2] *Corps de garde*.
[3] See Cæsar, *De Bello Civili*, III, 9.

CHAPTER XXXV

OF THREE GOOD WOMEN [1]

This Essay concerns itself with a nameless Italian bourgeoise; with the Arria who, dying, murmured: *Pæte, non dolet;* and with Pompeia Paulina, a young and very noble Roman lady, who married Seneca in his extreme old age. They were all wives whose devotion to their husbands proved itself by the sacrifice of life; and their honourable stories are beautiful, narrated by Montaigne. His tone of tender respect toward them is artistically heightened by the shrewd and gay irony of the introductory paragraph about wives in general.

The accounts of the first two he takes from Pliny's *Letters;* the last from Tacitus.

He makes a comment on the action of the first woman he mentions, which should not be overlooked. It is one of the frequent illustrations of Montaigne's high estimation of *les gens de bas-lieu.*

It may be observed, as with the preceding Essay, that this one underwent scarcely more than a few verbal changes in 1595; and evidently from the same cause, that is, because the matter is not for the most part original thought, but transcription.

THEY are not to be reckoned by dozens, as every one knows, and especially in respect to the duties of married life; for marriage is a bargain full of so many difficult circumstances that it is not easy for a woman's nature [2] to remain for a long time steadfast therein. Men, although in that state they may be in a somewhat better condition, find that not a little effort is needed.[3] (*b*) The touchstone of a good marriage, and its true proof, regards the character of the companionship during its existence: whether it has been ever kind, loyal, and meet. In our generation, wives more commonly reserve displaying their good offices and the warmth of their affection for their husbands until they have lost them; (*c*) they then at least seek to testify to their good-will. A tardy and unseasonable testimony! They rather prove by that, that they love them only when dead. (*b*) When living, it is all commotion;

[1] The literal translation of this title, which seems necessary, is not the true rendering of its meaning: it should rather be, "Of Three Devoted Wives."

[2] *Volonté.* [3] *Y ont prou affaire.*

when departing, love and courtesy.[1] As fathers conceal their affection from their children, in like manner wives readily conceal theirs from their husbands, by way of maintaining due respect. This absence of expression [2] is not at all to my taste; they may dishevel their hair and tear their faces with their nails: I whisper to a waiting-woman, or a secretary: "How were they together? How did they live?" I always remember that wise saying: *Jactantius mœrent, quæ minus dolent.*[3] Their glum looks are hateful to the living and useless to the dead. We will gladly allow them to laugh when we are dead, provided that they laugh with us while we are alive. (*c*) Is it not enough to bring one back to life with vexation, if she who spat in my face while I lived comes to rub my feet when I am no more?

(*b*) If there be any thing honourable in weeping for husbands, it is due only to those who have laughed with them; they who have wept during the husband's life, let them laugh when he is dead — outwardly as well as inwardly. Heed not, therefore, the tearful eyes and the pitiful voice; regard the bearing, the colour, and the roundness of the cheeks behind her long veils; it is with those that she speaks clearly.[4] There are few of them whose health does not improve — a thing that can not lie. That conventional demeanour does not look behind so much as before; it is more for acquisition than for payment. In my childhood, a virtuous and very beautiful lady, who is still living, the widow of a prince, had I know not what in her attire other than is allowed by our laws regarding widowhood; to those who blamed her for it, she said: "It is because I no longer enter into new friendships, and have no mind to marry again."

That I may not be wholly out of harmony with our wonted way of thought,[5] I have made choice of three women who, indeed, in connection with the death of their husbands, showed the strength of their tenderness and affection; these

[1] *La vie est pleine de combustion; le trespas, d'amour et de courtoisie.*

[2] *Ce mistere.*

[3] They who have the least grief weep most ostentatiously. — Tacitus, *Annals*, II, 77.

[4] *C'est par là qu'elle parle françois.*

[5] *Pour ne disconvenir du tout à nostre usage.*

are, however, examples of a little different character, and of such weight that they confidently imply the nature of the previous life.

(*a*) Pliny the younger had, near a house of his in Italy, a neighbour extremely tortured by ulcers which had formed in his private parts. His wife, seeing him suffer so long, begged him to permit her to look carefully and closely into the state of his malady, and said that she would tell him more frankly than any one else what he could hope for. Having obtained her wish, and having carefully examined him, she found that it was impossible that he could be cured, and that all that he had to expect was to drag out for a long time a painful and languishing life; so she advised him, as the most sure and sovereign remedy, to kill himself; and finding him lacking in courage for so pitiless an undertaking, "Do not think, my dear," she said, "that the pain which I see you suffer does not touch me as much as you, and that, to rid myself of it, I am not willing myself to use this medicine which I prescribe for you. I desire to accompany you in the cure, as I have done in the sickness; put aside this dread, and think that we shall have naught but pleasure in this passage which is to deliver us from such tortures; we will go hence together, happily." This said, and having kindled her husband's courage, she determined that they should throw themselves into the sea from a window of their house which opened upon it. And to maintain even to his end that faithful and vehement affection in which she had held him during his life, she desired even that he should die in her arms; but for fear that they might fail her, and that the closeness of her embrace might be loosened by the fall and by terror, she had herself tightly bound and attached to him around the waist, and thus gave up her life for her husband's peace of mind.[1]

She was of low station; and amongst people of that condition it is not very unusual to find instances of rare goodness:

extrema per illos
Justitia excedens terris vestigia fecit.[2]

[1] See Pliny, *Epistles*, VI, 24.

[2] It was among such as these that Justice, when she departed from earth, left her last footprints. — Virgil, *Georgics*, II, 473.

The other two women were of noble rank, and rich; amongst such, examples of high qualities rarely have lodgement.

Arria, wife of Cecinna Pætus, a man of consular rank, was the mother of another Arria, wife of Thrasea Pætus, he whose virtue was so renowned in the time of Nero; and through this son-in-law she was grandmother of Fannia; the similarity of the names of these men and women and of their fortunes has caused many persons to make mistakes. Cecinna Pætus, the husband of the first Arria, having been taken prisoner by the soldiers of the Emperor Claudius after the defeat of Scribonianus, whose party he had joined, his wife besought those who were carrying him as a prisoner to Rome to take her into their ship, where she would cause them much less expense and trouble than the number of persons they would need for her husband's service; and she alone would attend to his cabin and his cooking and all other offices. They refused her this; thereupon, having got into the boat of a fisherman, which she immediately hired, she followed him in this way from Sclavonia. When they were at Rome, one day, in the presence of the emperor, Junia, widow of Scribonianus, having accosted her familiarly because of the similarity of their fortunes, she repulsed her harshly with these words: "I," she said, "I speak to you, or listen to you, in whose lap Scribonianus was killed, and you still live!" These words, with many other indications, made her kinsfolk perceive that she was for doing away with herself, unable to endure her husband's ill-fortune. And Thrasea, her son-in-law, imploring her, consequently, not to seek to destroy herself, and thus saying to her, "What! if I should incur the same ill-fortune as Cecinna, would you desire that my wife, your daughter, should do this thing?" "How can you ask if I should desire it?" she answered. "Yes, yes, I should desire it, if she had lived as long and in as great harmony with you as I have done with my husband." Such answers increased their anxiety about her, and made them watch her actions more closely. One day, after saying to those who were guarding her, "Do your worst; you may indeed make me die a more painful death,[1] but keep me from dying you can not," she sprang madly from a

[1] *Vous avez beau faire, vous me pouvez bien faire plus mal mourir.*

chair on which she was seated, and with all her strength struck her head against the nearest wall. Having fallen to the floor unconscious and sorely hurt from this blow, after they had with great difficulty brought her back to life she said: "I told you that, if you denied me an easy way of killing myself, I would choose some other, however difficult it might be." The conclusion of such wonderful strength of soul [1] was in this wise: her husband, Pætus, not having a firm enough courage of his own to kill himself, to which the emperor's cruelty urged him, she, on one of the following days, after first employing the arguments and exhortations adapted to the advice she was giving him to do this, took the dagger that he wore, and holding it drawn in her hand, said, as the conclusion of her exhortation: "Do thus, Pætus." And instantly, having given herself with it a mortal blow in the breast, drawing it from the wound, she presented it to him, at the same moment ending her life with this noble, generous, and immortal saying: *Pæte, non dolet.* She had time to say only those three words of such fine significance: "See, Pætus, it does not hurt me." [2]

> Casta suo gladium cum traderet Arria Pæto,
> Quem de visceribus traxerat ipsa suis:
> Si qua fides, vulnus quod feci non dolet, inquit;
> Sed quod tu facies, id mihi, Pæte, dolet.[3]

Her words are much more lifelike in their actual form [4] and have a richer meaning; for the wound and the death of her husband and her own were so far from distressing her, that it was she who advised and promoted them; and having done that lofty and courageous deed for the sole benefit of her husband, she considered only him even in the last breath of her life, and how to take from him fear in following her to death. Pætus immediately struck himself with the same blade, ashamed, in my opinion, of having stood in need of so dear and precious a lesson.

[1] *Vertu.* [2] See Pliny, *Epistles*, III, 16.

[3] As the chaste Arria put in the hand of Pætus the sword she had first drawn from her own breast, "Believe me," she said, "the wound that I have made does not pain me, but the wound that you are to give yourself, that, O Pætus, pains me." — Martial, I, 14.1.

[4] That is, her own words are much more alive than those of Martial.

Pompeia Paulina, a young and high-born Roman lady, had married Seneca in his extreme old age. Nero, his fine disciple, sent guards to him to announce the decree of his death. (Such deaths were effected in this wise: when the Roman emperors of those days had condemned a man of rank, they sent word to him by their officers to choose some manner of death to his liking, and to execute it within such or such a time, which they assigned to him according to the quality of their anger, sometimes sooner, sometimes later, giving him opportunity to arrange his affairs in the interval, but sometimes depriving him of the power to do so by reason of the shortness of the time; and if the condemned man resisted their decree, they sent suitable persons to execute it, either by cutting the veins of his arms and legs or by forcing him to swallow poison; but men of reputation did not await that compulsion, but employed their own physicians and surgeons to that end.)

Seneca listened to their message with a calm and resolute countenance, and then asked for paper, to write his will; which having been refused him by the chief official, he turned to his friends and said: "Since I am able to leave you nothing else in recognition of what I owe you, I leave you at least the best I have — that is, the conception of my character and my life, which I beg you to retain in your memory, to the end that, by so doing, you may acquire the glory of sincere and true friends." And then, at one time soothing with gentle words the bitterness of the grief he saw them suffering, and at another time lifting up his voice to chide them, "Where," he said, "are those noble precepts of philosophy? What has become of the provisions we have garnered for so many years against the accidents of fortune? Was Nero's cruelty unknown to us? What could we expect from him who killed his mother and his brother, if not that he would also put to death his tutor, who fostered and educated him?"

Having said these words to them all, he turned toward his wife and, holding her closely in his embrace, since, from the burden of her grief, her courage and her strength failed her, he begged her, for love of him, to endure this mischance a little more patiently, and said that the hour had come when

he must show no longer by reasoning and discussions, but by deeds, the profit he had derived from his studies, and that of a surety he welcomed death, not only without grief, but with joy. "Wherefore, dear heart," he said, "do not dishonour it by your tears; let it not seem that you love yourself more than my good name; moderate your grief and comfort yourself with the knowledge you have of me and of my actions, and by leading the rest of your life in the honourable occupation to which you are devoted."

To which Paulina, having partly recovered her senses and rekindled by a very noble emotion the magnanimity of her heart, replied: "No, Seneca, I am not the woman to leave you in such need without my companionship; I will not have you think that the virtuous conditions [1] of your life have not taught me how to die well; and when could I do it better, or more honourably, or more to my liking, than with you? Be assured then that I shall depart with you." Whereupon Seneca, welcoming this resolution of his wife, so noble and glorious, and which also freed him from the fear of leaving her after his death to the mercy and cruelty of his enemies, said to her: "I have counseled you heretofore, Paulina, about what served to guide your life most happily; but you prefer the honour of death; truly I will not grudge it to you; firmness and resolution in our common end may be the same with us both, but beauty and glory are the greater on your side."

Then the veins of their arms were cut at the same time; but because those of Seneca, contracted by old age as well as by abstinence, made the flow of blood too slow and too slight, he ordered the veins of his legs also to be cut; and for fear lest the agony he thus suffered should impair his wife's courage, and also to be delivered from the affliction which he endured to see her in so piteous a state, after taking leave of her very lovingly, he begged her to allow herself to be taken into the next room; which was done. But all these incisions being still insufficient to cause his death, he ordered Statius Anneus, his physician, to give him a poisonous draught, which had scarcely more effect, for from the weakness and sluggishness of his organs it could not reach his

[1] *Exemples.*

heart. Therefore they placed him in a very hot bath; then, feeling his end to be near, as long as he had breath he continued to make most excellent remarks on the subject of the condition wherein he found himself, which his secretaries wrote down whilst they could hear his voice; and his last words remained long afterward in the hands of men, renowned and honoured (it is a very grievous loss to us that they have not come down to us). As he felt the last touches of death, taking the bloody water of the bath, he sprinkled his head, saying, "I dedicate this water to Jupiter the liberator."

Nero, being advised of all this, fearing that the death of Paulina, who was among the most highly connected Roman ladies and against whom he had no special causes of enmity, might be laid at his door, sent in all haste to have her wounds bound up; which her attendants did without her knowledge, she being already half dead and without consciousness. And thereafter as, contrary to her intent, she lived, it was most honourably and as comported with her virtue, showing by the pallor of her face how much of life had flowed away through her wounds.[1]

These are my three very true tales, which I find as entertaining and as tragic as those which we create at will to give pleasure to the common people; and I am surprised that those who devote themselves to that employment do not bethink themselves rather to choose ten thousand very delightful stories, which are to be found in books, with which they would have less trouble and would provide more pleasure and profit. And he who should choose to construct from them one complete and connected whole would have to supply nothing of his own save the connecting links, like the soldering with another metal; and he could by this means amass many true occurrences of all sorts, arranging them and diversifying them according as the beauty of the work demanded, somewhat as Ovid fastened together that vast number of various fables and pieced out his *Metamorphoses* with them.[2]

In the last couple this point also is worthy to be con-

[1] See Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, 61–64.

[2] In 1580 to 1588: *Ou comme Ariosto a rengê en une suite.*

sidered: that Paulina voluntarily offers to relinquish life for love of her husband, even as her husband had in former days relinquished death for love of her. There is not in our eyes much equality of weight in this barter; but I believe that, with his Stoic humour, he thought that he had done as much for her in prolonging his life on her account, as if he had died for her.

In one of the letters that he wrote to Lucilius, after he had informed him that, being attacked by fever at home, he at once took coach to go to a country house of his, against the advice of his wife, who wanted to stop him, and that he replied that the fever that he had was not a fever of the body, but of the place, he continued thus: "She let me go, urgently enjoining upon me to care for my health. Now I, knowing that I contain her life in mine, begin to take care of myself by way of taking care of her; the advantage that my old age has given me, making me firmer and more resolute in many things, I lose when I remember that in this old man there is a young woman who profits by me. Since I can not induce her to love me more courageously, she induces me to love myself more carefully; for something should be granted to honest affection; and sometimes, although events impel us contrariwise, we must summon back life, even a life of torment; we must vigorously detain the soul; [1] for the law, with the good, is not to live as long as they please, but as long as they ought. He who does not value his wife or his friend enough to prolong his life for them, and who persists in dying, is too sensitive and too weak; the soul must give this command to itself when the advantage of those nearest us demands it; it is for us sometimes to lend ourselves to our friends, and, when our wish would be to die, to give up our purpose for their sake. It is a proof of magnanimity to return to life out of consideration for others, as many excellent persons have done; and it is a trait of peculiar kindness to preserve one's old age (whereof the greatest advantage is indifference as to its duration, and a more courageous and contemptuous employment of life), if we feel that our doing this is sweet and agreeable and profitable to some one by whom we are beloved. And one receives from it a delightful

[1] *Il faut arrester l'ame entre les dents.*

reward; for what is sweeter than to be so precious to one's wife that, from regard for her, one becomes more precious to oneself? Thus my Paulina has loaded me, not only with her fear, but with my own also. It has not been enough for me to consider how resolutely I could die, but I have also considered how irresolutely [1] she could endure this. I have forced myself to live, and it is sometimes a magnanimous act to live." [2]

These are his words, (*c*) admirable, as was his wont.

CHAPTER XXXVI

OF THE MOST EMINENT MEN [3]

THE three *plus excellens hommes* — the three greatest men — of all time, in Montaigne's judgement, when he wrote this Essay, were Homer, Alexander, and Epaminondas; and as I have remarked (in considering the Essay on Cæsar's wars), this selection indicates Montaigne's admiration for men of action. Homer is great in his eyes, not because of his learning and his art, but because "his words are the only words that have movement and action, are the only *substantial* words"; because he was a master in military discipline, and his work is the best counsellor in military affairs; because all those who since his day have established governments have looked to him for guidance; because, in fine, in an ideal sense, if not literally, he was busied with *affairs* — with *things done*, not *things thought*. Therefore he is greater than the philosophers; greater than Aristotle, greater than Socrates.[4]

Alexander is greater than Cæsar because his glory was unstained by ruin wrought to his country. And Epaminondas is the greatest of all men, because his glory, lesser than that of the others, was stainless, his "innocence" was *maistresse*, *constante*, *uniforme*, *incorruptible*. And, in truth, *glory* "is not a part of the substance of the thing [excellence]." The proof of his greatness, in sharpest contrast with Cæsar's, was that "the prosperity of his country died when he died, even as it was born

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[1] *Irresoluement*. Montaigne uses this word in the sense of *sans fermeté*. Both it and *irresolution* were introduced by him into the language.

[2] See Seneca, *Epistle* 104.1–5.

[3] *Des plus excellens hommes*.

[4] Note the splendid exaggeration regarding the poem: "Is not that a noble drama, of which kings, republics, and emperors play the characters through so many ages, and for which all this great universe serves as theatre!"

with him." For another eulogy of Epaminondas see the first chapter of Book III (page 251 *infra*).

The notice of Alcibiades toward the end of this Essay, and what just precedes, were added in 1595: otherwise there were few changes made.

In later years Montaigne thought Socrates "the man most deserving to be known, and to be set before the world as an example." (See Book III, chapter 12.)

IF I am asked to choose among all the men who have come to my knowledge, it seems to me that I find three superior to all others. First, there is Homer; not that Aristotle, or Varro (for example), was not perchance as learned as he, or that possibly Virgil in his art is not comparable to him; I leave that to be judged by those who know them both. I, who know but one of them,[1] can say only that, so far as my ability goes, I do not believe that the Muses themselves surpassed the Roman.

(*b*) Tale facit carmen docta testudine, quale
Cynthius impositis temperat articulis.[2]

(*a*) However, in thus judging, it is not to be forgotten that it is principally from Homer that Virgil derives his learning; that he is his guide and schoolmaster, and that a single passage of the *Iliad* furnished body and substance for that great and divine *Æneid*. But it is not this only that I take into account: I add thereto many other conditions which make that personage marvellous in my eyes almost above the human estate. And in truth I often wonder that he, who created many deities and brought them into favour with the world by his own authority, has not himself attained the rank of a god. Being blind and poor, living before knowledge had been reduced to regular and fixed laws, he so well understood different branches of knowledge that all those who have since undertaken to establish forms of government, to manage wars, and to write, whether about religion or about philosophy, (*c*) in whatsoever sect, (*a*) or about the arts, have made use of him as a master very accomplished in all knowledge, and of his books as a storehouse containing every kind of learning.

[1] Virgil.

[2] He sings to his learned lyre such songs as Cynthius [Apollo] modulates with the touch of his fingers. — Propertius, II, 34.79.

Qui, quid sit pulchrum, quid turpe, quid utile, quid non,
Plenius ac melius Chrysippo ac Crantore dicit.[1]

And, as another says: —

A quo, ceu fonte perenni,
Vatum Pyeriis labra rigantur aquis.[2]

And another: —

Adde Heliconiadum comites, quorum unus Homerus
Sceptra potitus.[3]

And another: —

Cujusque ex ore profuso
Omnis posteritas latices in carmina duxit,
Amnemque in tenues ausa est deducere rivos,
Unius fœcunda bonis.[4]

It was contrary to the order of nature that he produced the most perfect work possible; for ordinarily the beginning of things is imperfect; they are enlarged and strengthened by increase; the infancy of poetry and of many other kinds of learning was rendered by him mature, perfect, and complete. For this reason we may call him the first and last of poets, according to that noble testimony to him that antiquity has left us, that there was no one before him whom he could imitate and no one after him who could imitate him.[5] His words, according to Aristotle, are the only words that have motion and action; they are the only substantial words.[6]

[1] He tells us more clearly and better than Chrysippus and Crantor what is noble, what is base, what is useful, and what is not so. — Horace, *Epistles*, I, 2.3.

[2] From which, as from a never-failing spring, the mouths of poets are refreshed by Pierian waters. — Ovid, *Amores*, III, 9.25.

[3] Add to these the companions of the Heliconian maids [the Muses], of whom Homer bore the sceptre without a peer. — Lucretius, III, 1037.

[4] From this profuse source posterity has drawn for song, and has ventured to turn his river into their streams, enriched by the wealth of one man. — Manilius, *Astronomica*, II, 8.

[5] See Bodin, *Methodus ad facilem historiarum cognitionem*, IV, 74, quoting Velleius Paterculus, I, 5.

[6] See Plutarch, *Oracles of the Pythian Prophetess;* Aristotle, *Poetics*, XXIV.

Alexander the Great, having found among the spoils of Darius a rich casket, ordered that it should be reserved for him to keep his Homer in, saying that this book was the best and most trustworthy counsellor he had in his military affairs.[1] For this same reason Cleomenes, son of Anaxandridas, said that he was the poet for the Lacedæmonians, because he was a great master of the art of war.[2] The peculiar and special commendation also, in Plutarch's judgement, belonged to him, "that he is the only author in the world with whom mankind has never been surfeited or wearied, as he always showed different sides to his readers, and was always esteemed with fresh favour."[3] That madcap Alcibiades, having sought from one who made profession of letters a book of Homer, gave him a cuff because he had none;[4] as if one of our priests should be caught without his breviary. Xenophanes bewailed himself one day to Hiero, tyrant of Syracuse, because he was so poor that he had not the wherewithal to maintain two attendants. "And yet," was answered him, "Homer, who was much poorer than you, maintains more than ten thousand, dead as he is."[5] (*c*) What was there not in the saying of Panætius, when he called Plato the Homer of philosophers?[6] (*a*) Besides all this, what fame can be compared to his? There is nothing that so lives in the mouths of men as his name and his works; nothing so well known and so universally admitted as Troy, Helen, and her wars, which, perchance, never were. Our children are still called by the names that he invented more than three thousand years ago. Who does not know Hector and Achilles? Not only some special races, but the greater number of nations, seek their origin in his inventions. Mahomet, the second of that name, Emperor of the Turks, writing to our Pope Pius II, says: "I am astonished that the Italians oppose me, seeing that we have our common origin in the Trojans, and that it is for their interest as well as

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Alexander;* Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, V, 29.
[2] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*
[3] See Idem, *Of Garrulity.*
[4] See Idem, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc., and *Life of Alcibiades.*
[5] See Idem, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.
[6] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 32.

mine to avenge the blood of Hector upon the Greeks, whom they are favouring against me." [1] Is not that a noble drama,[2] of which kings, republics, and emperors play the characters through so many ages, and for which all this great universe serves as theatre! [3] Seven Grecian cities disputed his place of birth, so much honour did his very obscurity bring him: —

Smyrna, Rhodos, Colophon, Salamis, Chios, Argos, Athenæ.[4]

Another [5] is Alexander the Great. For, if we consider his age when he began his enterprises; the scanty resources with which he effected so glorious a design; the authority which he acquired in those youthful days among the greatest and most experienced captains in the world by whom he was followed; the extraordinary favour with which fortune embraced and assisted so many of his hazardous and, I may almost say, audacious exploits —

(*b*) impellens quicquid sibi summa petenti
Obstaret, gaudensque viam fecisse ruina; [6]

(*a*) that great performance of having, at thirty-three years of age, victoriously passed over all the habitable earth, (*b*) and attained in half a lifetime the whole power of human nature, so that you can not picture a duration of the usual length for him, and the continuance of his growth in valour and fortune to the ordinary term of years, without picturing something more than man; (*a*) the having created from amongst his soldiers so many royal lines, leaving at his death the world divided amongst four successors known only as commanders of his army, whose descendants have, so long a time after, continued to maintain that great possession; so many eminent virtues that existed in him: (*b*) justice, temperance, liberality, loyalty to his word, love for those near him, humanity to the conquered, (*a*) for his conduct seems, in

[1] See Gentillet, *Discours sur les moyens de bien gouverner.*
[2] *Farce.*
[3] That is, as audience.
[4] Translation of a Greek verse, quoted by Aulus Gellius, III, 11.
[5] That is, another of "the most eminent men."
[6] Sweeping away whatever opposed his lofty ambition, and delighting in making a path through ruins. — Lucan, I, 149.

truth, to be subject to no reproach (*b*) (yes, certainly, some few of his infrequent private actions; but it is impossible to carry on within the rules of justice such great operations; men such as he are to be judged as a whole, by the controlling aim of their actions. The destruction of Thebes,[1] the murder of Menander and of the physician of Ephestion, of so many Persian captives at one stroke, of a troop of Indian soldiers not without breach of his word, of the Cossians even to the little children,[2] are violences somewhat inexcusable. And as for Clytus,[3] the crime was atoned for beyond its importance, and the quality of his repentance[4] bears witness not less than other acts to the friendliness of his disposition, and that his nature was in itself peculiarly inclined to kindness; [*c*] and it has been wittily said of him that he had his virtues by nature, his vices by fortune.[5] [*b*] As to his being a little given to boasting, a little too intolerant of hearing himself spoken ill of; and as to the mangers, weapons, and bits which he caused to be scattered about in the Indies,[6] all these things, it seems to me, can be condoned on account of his age and the unusual prosperity of his fortunes[7]) if we consider at the same time so many military virtues: diligence, foresight, patience, discipline, subtlety, craft, magnanimity, resolution, good-fortune, in which, even if the authority of Hannibal had not so taught us,[8] he was the first of men; (*a*) the rare beauty and qualities

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Alexander;* Quintus Curtius, I, 11.

[2] For all these instances, see Plutarch, *Life of Alexander.*

[3] See Quintus Curtius, VIII, 1. [4] *Cette action.*

[5] See Idem, X, 5. Montaigne took this from Conestaggio, *Unione del regno,* etc.

[6] See Plutarch, *Life of Alexander:* "This notwithstanding, before he departed from those parts, he put forth many vain and false devices to make his name immortal among that people. He made armours of greater proportion than his own, and mangers for horses, higher than the common sort; moreover, he made bits also far heavier than the common sort, and made them to be thrown and scattered abroad in every place." — North's translation of Amyot. Cf. Diodorus Siculus, XVII, 95; Quintus Curtius, IX, 3.

[7] See Arrian, VII, near the end.

[8] The original source of this is Livy, XXXV, 14, and one of Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead;* but Montaigne took it from a writer of his own day.

of his person, even bordering on the miraculous;[1] (*b*) his bearing and awe-inspiring demeanour, with a face so youthful, ruddy, and radiant, —

> Qualis, ubi Oceani perfusus Lucifer unda,
> Quem Venus ante alios astrorum diligit ignes,
> Extulit os sacrum cœlo, tenebrasque resolvit,[2] —

(*a*) the superiority of his knowledge and capacity; the duration and grandeur of his glory, pure, clean, stainless, and exempt from rivalry; (*b*) and that, even a long time after his death, it was a religious belief to think that medals with his image brought good-fortune to those who wore them; and that more kings and princes have written of his deeds than other historians have written of any other king or prince whatever; (*c*) and that, even at the present day, the Mohammedans, who despise all other histories, accept and honour his alone, by special prerogative,[3] — (*a*) we must confess, all this taken together, that I have had grounds for placing him above Cæsar himself, who alone has made me a little doubtful as to the choice. (*b*) And it can not be denied that there is more that is his own in Cæsar's exploits, more fortune in those of Alexander.[4] (*a*) They were equals in many respects, and Cæsar, perchance, the greater in some. (*b*) They were two flames, or two torrents, that ravaged the world in divers parts, —

> Et velut immissi diversis partibus ignes
> Arentem in silvam et virgulta sonantia lauro;
> Aut ubi decursu rapido de montibus altis
> Dant sonitum spumosi amnes et in æquora currunt,
> Quisque suum populatus iter.[5]

[1] In 1580 only: *Car on tient entre autres choses que sa sueur produisoit une tres douce et souefve odeur.*

[2] Like Lucifer, whom Venus delights in more than all the other starry luminaries, when he has bathed in the waves of Ocean, and lifts his sacred head to heaven, and dissipates the darkness. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VIII, 589.

[3] See G. Postel, *Histoire des Turcs*.

[4] Cf. Book II, chap. 34 (pp. 167, 168, *supra*).

[5] Like flames kindled in different parts of a dry forest, and in the whispering laurel thickets, or when foaming rivers rush noisily down high mountains through the plains, devastating them on their way. — Virgil, *Æneid*, XII, 521.

But, if Cæsar's ambition was in its nature more moderate, it was so unfortunate in having fastened upon the villainous object of the ruin of his country and the universal impairing of the world that, (*a*) all things collected and put in the scales, I can not but incline toward the side of Alexander.

The third, and the most eminent in my opinion, is Epaminondas.[1] Of fame he has not nearly so much as others (which indeed is not a part of the substance of the matter);[2] of resolution and of valour — not that which is sharpened by ambition, but that which wisdom and renown can implant in a well-ordered soul — he had all that can be imagined. As proof of this virtue in him, he did as much, in my opinion, as Alexander himself and Cæsar; for, although his exploits in war were neither so frequent nor so large in scope,[3] yet they do not fail, when carefully considered with all their circumstances, to show as much weight and inflexibility,[4] and to bear as strong testimony of boldness and of military ability. The Greeks did him the honour, without gainsaying, of calling him the first man among them;[5] but to be the first man in Greece is easily to be the first in the world. As for his learning and ability, this ancient judgement about it has come down to us, that no man ever knew so much and said so little as he.[6] (*c*) For he was a Pythagorean by sect.[7] And what he said, no one ever said better; an eminent and very persuasive orator. (*a*) But as to his character and conscience, he very far surpassed all those who have ever undertaken to manage public affairs. For in that part of a man which should be chiefly considered, (*c*) which alone indicates truly what manner of men we are, and which I hold to outweigh by itself all the others together, (*a*) he gives place to no philosopher, not to Socrates himself. (*b*) In this man, innocence is a special quality,

[1] Cf. Book III, chap. 1 (p. 251, *infra*), for a confirmation of this estimate of Epaminondas.

[2] Cf. the opening paragraph of Book II, chap. 16, *supra*.

[3] *Ny si enflez.*

[4] *D'estre aussi poisants, et roides.*

[5] See Diodorus Siculus, XV, 24; Pausanias, VIII, 11; Cicero, *De Oratore*, III, 34.

[6] See Plutarch, *Of the dæmon of Socrates*, and *Of Hearing*.

[7] See Diodorus Siculus, XV, 10; Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 44.

sovereign, constant, uniform, incorruptible, in comparison with which it appears in Alexander subordinate, uncertain, many-hued, lax, and fortuitous.

(*c*) It was judged by the ancients that, in examining part by part all the other great military leaders, there is found in each of them some special quality which makes him illustrious.[1] In this man[2] alone there are power and ability which are even and alike throughout; he, in all the functions of human life, leaves nothing to be desired in him, whether in public or private employment, peaceful or warlike, whether it be in living, or in dying greatly and gloriously. I know neither the figure nor fortune of any man which I regard with so much honour and affection. It is, indeed, true that his persistence in poverty, as it is depicted by his best friends,[3] seems to me somewhat overdone. And this condition alone, albeit lofty and most worthy of admiration, I feel to be a little too bitter for me even to think of wishing to imitate it, to the degree to which he carried it. Scipio Æmilianus alone, could we bestow on him so proud and magnificent an end, and an extent of learning so profound and universal, could make me doubtful as to the choice. Oh, what an ill turn time has done me, to take out of our sight, as of set purpose, amongst the foremost men, precisely the noblest pair of lives in Plutarch, of those two personages who were, by the common consent of the world, one the first of the Greeks, the other, of the Romans.[4] What material — what a workman! For a man who was no saint, but, as we say, a fine fellow, of town-bred and usual ways,[5] of moderate eminence, the richest life that I know to have been lived amongst living men, as the saying is, and most replete with high and desirable conditions, is, all things considered, to my mind, that of Alcibiades.

(*a*) But, to return to Epaminondas, I desire, as evidencing his extremely good heart, to add here some of his ideas. (*b*) The sweetest satisfaction that he had in his whole life,

[1] See Diodorus Siculus, XV, 24.

[2] Epaminondas.

[3] See Plutarch, *Of the dæmon of Socrates*.

[4] Plutarch is supposed to have written a "parallel" between the lives of Scipio and Epaminondas, which has never been recovered.

[5] *Mais galant home qu'ils nomment, de meurs civiles et communes.*

he declared, was the pleasure he had given his father and mother by his victory of Leuctra;[1] he plays high,[2] setting their pleasure above his own, so just and complete, in so glorious a deed. (*a*) He did not think it permissible, even were it to restore liberty to his country, to kill a man without unquestionable justification;[3] this is the reason that he was so slow about the enterprise of his close friend Pelopidas for the deliverance of Thebes. He held also that, in a battle, an encounter with a friend who was on the opposite side must be avoided, and he must be spared.[4] (*c*) And his consideration for his enemies having even caused him to be suspected by the Bœotians, — forasmuch as, after he had, as by a miracle, forced the Lacedæmonians to open to him the pass they had undertaken to hold at the entrance of the Morea near Corinth, he was content with passing through them,[5] without pursuing them to the utmost, — he was deposed from the office of general-in-chief — most honourably for such a reason, and for the shame which was theirs[6] in being driven by necessity to place him again, soon after, in his command, and to acknowledge how much their glory and their salvation depended upon him, victory following him, like his shadow, wherever he led.[7] The prosperity of his country, indeed, died when he died, even as it was born with him.[8]

[1] See Plutarch, *That it is not possible to live happily according to the teaching of Epicurus*, and *Life of Coriolanus*.

[2] *Il couche de beaucoup*.

[3] *Sans connoissance de cause*. See Plutarch, *Of the dæmon of Socrates*.

[4] See *Ibid*.

[5] *De leur avoir passé sur le ventre*.

[6] That is, the Bœotians'.

[7] See Diodorus Siculus, XV, 19.

[8] See *Ibid*., XV, 24; C. Nepos, *Life of Epaminondas*.

CHAPTER XXXVII

OF THE RESEMBLANCE OF CHILDREN TO THEIR FATHERS

THIS is one of the *conversational* Essays; indeed, it is of a completely irregular character, since a letter to Madame de Duras is interpolated in the middle of it. But the beginning of it always seems to me as if it had been *talked* in his tower-room to some friend — Pierre de Brach, perhaps, or Charron — to whom he had just been showing the pile of unprinted manuscripts which a year later were to be published. (This date is fixed by the first line of the second paragraph of the next page, if, as is natural, we assign the time of his *retreat* — 1571 — as the time of his beginning to write the Essays.)

This is the last Essay of the second book, that is, the last of those which appeared in 1580; and it is the longest but two ("Of the Education of Children," and "Of Presumption") in the two books (not counting the "Apology," always to be considered by itself). In this respect of its length, and still more in the freedom of its movement, it foretells the superior quality of the third book. But, because of its subject, it can not take rank with the *great* Essays. Its subject is now out of date and consequently lacking in interest; for it is not *la ressemblance des enfants aux pères* that this Essay treats of, but the imperfections of the science of medicine, and the mistakes of medical men. The imperfections and mistakes of that age are so obvious to us now, that it demands some effort to recognise how much intelligence was needed to perceive them in their own day; and the careless reader is likely to accept Montaigne's truths as truisms and to find them dull because they are such familiar truths to us; or else to misinterpret them, fancying foolishly that Montaigne would hold the same views to-day.

He is led to discourse of medicine by speaking of the incomprehensible characters of inherited bodily conditions — *la ressemblance* [in a sense] *des enfants aux pères;* and he is led to speak of these inherited conditions by what he has been saying about his sufferings from the stone, a malady he inherited from his father.

The first part of the *talk* is the communication, as to a friend, of how these Essays — that he is now thinking of printing — have come into being, and of the changes wrought in himself during the years he has been writing them; especially, during the last eighteen months, the unpleasant change to *un vivre choliqueux.*

The quibblers about Montaigne's sincerity and truthfulness sometimes point critically to the passage here where he says: *Je ne corrige point mes premieres imaginations, peu les secondes,* and cry, "Look at the differences in the different editions!" But they do not observe that the differences are of the slightest (except in the way of *additions*)

till fifteen years later, in the posthumous edition; and even then there is no correction of *opinions*, only of language, and only trivial "takings away."

THIS fagotting of so many different kinds of sticks is done in these conditions, that I put my hand to it only when a too futile idleness weighs on me, and nowhere but in my own house. So it is compacted with varying pauses and intervals, as matters detain me elsewhere, sometimes for many months. Furthermore, I do not correct my first ideas by later ones — (*c*) oh, perchance some word, but to give variety, not to take any thing away. (*a*) I wish to represent the progress of my moods, and that each part shall be seen at its birth. I should find pleasure in having begun sooner and in recognising the course of my mutations. A young man of my household, whom I employed to write at my dictation, thought that he had great booty when he stole from me several pieces, selected at his pleasure.[1] It consoles me that his gain will not be more than my loss.

I am seven or eight years older than when I began, and not without new acquisitions. I have become endowed with the colic [2] by the gift of the years. In commerce and long converse with them [3] some such gain is easily made. I could wish that, of many other presents which they have it in their power to bestow upon those who have long association with them, they had chosen one that would have been more acceptable to me; for they could not have given me any one of which from my youth I had more horror; it was precisely, of all the mishaps of old age, the one that I most dreaded. I had thought to myself many a time that I was going too far, and that, travelling so long a road, I should not fail, at last, to be involved in some unpleasant encounter. I felt, and sufficiently declared, that it was time to go hence, and that life should be cut off in the living and sound part, according to the method of surgeons when they have to cut off some limb; (*c*) that Nature was wont to demand very harsh

[1] Cf. Book II, chap. 9, near the end (text of 1588).

[2] *La cholique pierreuse:* "A paine like the cholicke, but comming of a stone in the kidneys." — Cotgrave.

[3] That is, the years.

usury of him who did not quickly pay her. (*a*) But these were idle propositions. I was far from ready to accept them then; and in the eighteen months or thereabouts that I have been in this disagreeable condition, I have already learned to adapt myself to it. I am already entering into an agreement with this colical life; I find therein the wherewithal to console me and to give me hope. So domesticated are men to their miserable existence, that there is no condition so wretched that they are not prepared to accept it for self-preservation.

(*c*) Hear Mæcenas: —

> Debilem facito manu,
> Debilem pede, coxa,
> Lubricos quate dentes;
> Vita dum superest, bene est.[1]

And Tamburlane masked with absurd humanity the fantastic cruelty that he practised against lepers, in putting to death as many of them as came to his knowledge, in order, he said, to deliver them from the doleful life they were living. For there was no one of them who would not have liked better to be thrice a leper than not to exist.[2] And Antisthenes the Stoic, being very ill, and exclaiming, "Who will deliver me from this suffering?" Diogenes, who had come to see him, gave answer, offering him a knife, "This, if you choose, forthwith." — "I did not say from life," he rejoined, "but from this suffering." [3]

(*a*) The troubles that affect us simply in the mind afflict me much less than they do the greater number of other men; partly from judgement (for the world deems many things horrible, or to be avoided at the cost of life, which are to me well-nigh indifferent); partly from the dull and insensible nature that I have as regards circumstances which do not touch me directly, which nature I consider one of the best parts of my inborn condition. But the truly essential and bodily sufferings I feel very keenly. Nevertheless, fore-

[1] Make me weak of hand, of foot and leg, shake loose my teeth; while life remains, it suffices. — Seneca, *Epistle* 101.

[2] See Chalcondylas, III, 10.

[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Antisthenes*.

seeing them in other days with feeble and sensitive vision, weakened by the enjoyment of the long and fortunate good health and repose which God bestowed on me during the greater part of my life, I had in my imagination conceived them as so intolerable that, in truth, I had more fear of them than I have found evil in them.[1] Wherefore I believe ever more confidently that the greater number of the faculties of our mind, (*c*) as we employ them, (*a*) disturb the repose of life more than they promote it.

I am in the clutches of the worst of all diseases, the most violent, the most grievous, the most deadly, and the most irremediable. I have already experienced five or six very long and painful attacks of it; nevertheless, either I flatter myself, or else there is in these conditions ground to sustain him whose soul is free from the fear of death and free from the threatenings, conclusions, and consequences which the art of physic puts into our head. The condition of pain has not so hard and poignant a bitterness that a man of settled mind should thereby fall into madness and despair. I have at least this profit from the colic, that what I have not yet been able to master for myself — the wholly reconciling myself to death and familiarising myself with it — this malady will accomplish; for the more it may assail me and torment me, by so much the less will death be to be feared. I had already gained this, that I clung to life solely for the sake of life; this malady will unloose that connection also; and God grant that finally, if its severity shall surpass my strength, it may not throw me into the other extreme, not less sinful, of loving and desiring death!

Summum nec metuas diem, nec optes.[2]

Both these dispositions[3] are to be feared, but one has its remedy much nearer at hand than the other.

For the rest, I have always found that precept a formality which commands us so sternly and explicitly to maintain a steady front and a disdainful and composed demeanour when enduring discomforts. Why does Philosophy, which

[1] Cf. Book II, chap. 6 (Vol. II, p. 92).
[2] Neither fear nor desire your last day. — Martial, X, 47.13.
[3] *Passions.*

regards only the essential and realities,[1] busy herself with these external appearances? (*c*) Let her leave the care of this to play-actors and teachers of rhetoric, who think our gestures so important. Let her boldly forgive discomfort for this vocal unmanliness, if it is neither of the heart, nor profound;[2] and place these voluntary lamentations in the same class as sighs, sobs, palpitations, and pallors, which Nature has put beyond our control. Provided the spirit be void of terror, the words void of despair, let her be content! What matter if we toss about our arms, provided we do not toss about our thoughts? She trains us for ourselves, not for others; to be, not to seem. (*a*) Let her be satisfied with controlling our understanding, which she has undertaken to instruct; let her, while she is in the throes of the colic, keep the soul capable of recognising herself, of following her accustomed course; combatting pain and sustaining it, not shamefully prostrating herself at its feet; excited and heated by the combat, not cast down and overthrown; (*c*) capable of intercourse, and capable of conversation to a certain extent.

(*a*) In such extreme conditions it is cruel to demand of us a bearing so composed. If we play the game well, it matters little that we have a doleful countenance.[3] If the body is relieved by complaining, let it complain; if movement gives it pleasure, let it toss and turn as it will; if it seems to it that the pain is in some degree diminished (as some physicians say that this helps in the delivery of pregnant women [4]) by uttering very violent outcries, or if that diverts its pangs, let it scream its loudest. (*c*) Let us not order this noise to be made, but let us permit it to the body. Epicurus does not merely permit his wise man to cry out in his agony, but advises him to do so.[5] *Pugiles etiam, cum feriunt in jactandis cœstibus, ingemiscunt, quia profundenda voce omne corpus in-*

[1] *Le vif et les effects.*

[2] *Ny cordiale, ny stomacale.*

[3] In 1580 to 1588: *C'est bien assez que nous soyons tels, que avons nous accoustumé en nos pensées et actions principales.*

[4] See Laurent Joubert, *Erreurs populaires au faict de la médecine.*

[5] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Epicurus.* Henri Estienne, in his Latin translation, has: *Cum tamen cruciatur et ingemiscet et ejulabit,* but the modern texts give a precisely opposite sense.

tenditur, venitque plaga vehementior.[1] (*a*) We have enough labour from the evil circumstance without labouring at these superfluous precepts. Which I say to excuse those who are commonly seen raving under the sudden shocks and assaults of this disease; since, as for myself, I have passed through it up to this time with a somewhat better countenance; not, however, that I give myself trouble to maintain this external decorum, for I make little account of such an advantage; I yield therein to the pain all it demands; but either my sufferings are not so severe, or I meet them with more steadiness than most people. I complain, I fume, when the sharp pains seize me, but I am not beside myself, (*c*) like this man, —

> Ejulatu, questu, gemitu, fremitibus
> Resonando multum flebiles voces refert.[2]

I test myself when the pain is at its worst; and I have always found that I am able to talk, to think, to reply, as sanely as at any other time; but not so continuously, the suffering disturbing and distracting me. When I am thought to be most cast down, and those who are with me demand nothing of me, I often make trial of my powers, and myself broach subjects furthest removed from my conditions. I can do any thing by a sudden effort; but let it not last long. O que n'ay je la faculte de ce songeur de Cicero qui, songeant embrasser une garse, trouva qu'il s'estoit descharge de sa pierre emmi ses draps![3] Les miennes me desgarsent estrangement!

(*a*) In the intervals of this extreme suffering, (*c*) when my ureters are enfeebled but do not fret me, (*a*) I quickly recover my usual form, because my soul feels no alarm at what affects only the senses and the body; which I owe as-

[1] Pugilists, also, when they strike in throwing the cestus, utter groans, because, by expelling the voice, the whole body is made tense, and the blow comes with more violence. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 23. Cicero wrote*: ingemiscunt; non quid doleant, animove succumbant, sed quia*, etc.

[2] With resounding lamentations, groans, sobs, and cries, his melancholy voice declares much. — Attius, *Philoctetes*, quoted by Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 29, and *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 14.

[3] See Cicero, *De Divin.*, II, 69.

suredly to the care that I have taken to prepare myself by reflection for such casualties;

(*b*) laborum
Nulla mihi nova nunc facies inopinaque surgit:
Omnia præcepi atque animo mecum ante peregi.[1]

(*a*) I am pestered, however, somewhat severely for a novice, and with an extremely sudden and harsh pain, having fallen abruptly from a very pleasant and very fortunate condition of life to the most dolorous and painful that can be imagined; for, besides that this is a disease greatly to be dreaded in itself, its beginnings in me are much more sharp and troublesome than they are wont to be. The attacks recur so often that I almost never feel in perfect health. Nevertheless, I maintain my mind up to this hour in such a state that, provided I can persist in it, I find myself in a much better condition of life than a thousand others who have no fever or ill but that which they give themselves by lack of judgement.

There is a certain kind of subtle humility which is born of presumption, as, for instance, this: that we acknowledge our ignorance in many things, and are so courteous as to admit that there are in the works of nature some qualities and conditions which are imperceptible to us, and of which our faculties can not discover the methods and the causes. By this honest and conscientious declaration, we hope to obtain that we shall be believed as to those things that we say we understand. We have no occasion to seek for miracles and unfamiliar difficulties; it seems to me that, amongst the things we see every day, there are some so strange and so incomprehensible that they surpass all the difficulty of miracles. What a wonderful thing it is that that drop of seed from which we are produced bears in it the impressions, not of the bodily form alone, but of the thoughts and inclinations of our fathers! That drop of water — how does it

[1] No new or unexpected kind of hardship now is presented to me: I have before seen and considered all in my mind. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VI, 103. The true text is: —

Non ulla laborum
O virgo, nova mi facies inopinare surgit

contain this endless number of forms? (*b*) And how does it convey these resemblances, whose course is so headlong and irregular that the great-grandchild will resemble his great-grandfather, the nephew his uncle? In the family of Lepidus at Rome there were three persons, not in direct succession but at intervals, who were born with one and the same eye covered by a cartilage.[1] In Thebes there was a family which bore from the mother's womb the mark of a lance-head, and he who bore it not was considered illegitimate.[2] Aristotle says that, in a certain nation where the women were held in common, the children were assigned to their fathers by resemblance.[3]

(*a*) It is to be believed that I owe to my father this stony condition; for he died terribly tormented by a great stone in his bladder. He perceived nothing of his malady until his sixty-seventh year; and before that he had no threatening of it, and no twinges in the loins or the sides, or elsewhere; and he had lived until that time in excellent health, and very little subject to sickness; and he lived seven years longer with this disease, dragging on a very dolorous close of his life. I was born twenty-five years and more before his sickness, and during his best condition — the third of his children in order of birth. Where, for so long a time, was the proneness to this failing being hatched? And when he was so far from the disease, how did that slight piece of his substance of which he composed me receive for its share so strong an impression of it? And how remain so hidden that forty-five years later I should begin to feel it — I, the only one to this hour among so many brothers and sisters, and all by one mother? Whoever will enlighten me about the happening of this,[4] I will believe him about as many other miracles as he likes, provided that he does not, as some do, give me as satisfaction a belief[5] much more puzzling and fanciful than the thing itself.

Let physicians be a little lenient to my freedom of speech;

[1] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, VII, 12.

[2] See Plutarch, *On the delays of divine justice.*

[3] See the *Politics*, II, 2 (Le Roy's translation). Herodotus (IV, 180) says that this custom prevails among the Auseans, a tribe of Libya.

[4] *De ce progres.* [5] *Un doctrine.*

for by means of this same infusion and fatal penetration, I have imbibed hatred and contempt of their science.[1] This antipathy that I have for their art is hereditary: my father lived to be seventy-four, my grandfather sixty-nine, my great-grandfather well-nigh eighty, without having tasted any sort of medicine; and with them every thing that was not in common use was regarded as a drug. Medicine is based upon examples and experience; so is my opinion. Is not this a very express and excellent experience? I question if they [2] will find in their records three persons who were born, brought up, and died at the same hearth, under the same roof, who also lived according to their rules.[3] They must needs acknowledge that, if reason is not on my side, at least fortune is; now, with physicians, fortune is of more consequence than reason. Let them not in these days take me at a disadvantage; let them not threaten me, laid by the heels as I am; that would be foul play. And, to tell the truth, I have enough the better of them by my household examples, although they here come to an end. Human affairs have not so great stability; it is two hundred years lacking only eighteen that this experience continued with us; for the first was born in the year 1402.[4] It is, in truth, quite natural that this experience should begin to fail us. Let them not upbraid me with the pains that now have me by the throat; to have lived forty-six years,[5] for my part — is not that enough? If it shall be the end of my career, it is of the longest.

My ancestors held medicine in loathing, from an occult and innate instinct; for the very sight of drugs was abhorrent to my father. The seigneur de Gaviac, my paternal

[1] *De leur doctrine.* [2] That is, physicians.

[3] Montaigne slightly misrepresents the facts: his great-grandfather, Ramon Eyquem, purchased *le maison noble de Montaigne* in 1477, when his son, Montaigne's grandfather, was already born.

[4] Another mistake in reckoning: Montaigne's great-grandfather was born in 1402; his father died in 1568, or two hundred years, lacking *thirty-four*, later.

[5] This is the reading of 1580 to 1588; the posthumous edition reads: *d'avoir vescu* sain *quarante-sept ans;* the inserted word (*sain*) would seem to be there by mistake; the difference of date is the difference between the writing and the publication of the Essay.

uncle, an ecclesiastic, who was sickly from his birth, and who nevertheless prolonged his feeble life to sixty-seven years, having fallen once into a violent and continuous fever, the physicians ordered that he should be plainly told that, if he would not help himself (they call help that which most frequently is a hindrance), he was infallibly a dead man. The worthy man, much terrified as he was by that appalling sentence, nevertheless replied: "Then I am a dead man." But God soon after made that prognostic of no account. (*b*) The youngest of the brothers, — there were four of them, — sieur de Bussaguet (and he was very much the youngest), alone subjected himself to that science, by reason, so I believe, of the commerce he had with other sciences, for he was a councillor in the court of Parliament; and medicine succeeded so ill with him that, though he was apparently of very strong constitution, he died long before the others, except one, sieur de Saint-Michel.

(*a*) It is possible that I may have derived from my ancestors this natural antipathy to medicine; but if there had been only that ground for it, I would have tried to overcome it. For all those conditions which are born in us without foundation are unsound; it is a sort of sickness to be combatted; perhaps it was thus that I derived this inborn inclination, but I have supported it and strengthened it by arguments which have confirmed in me the opinion that I have of the matter. For I also hate the idea of refusing medicine because of its bitter taste; I should hardly be of that humour, I who hold health worthy of purchase by all the most painful burnings and cuttings that can be used. (*c*) And in accordance with Epicurus, pleasures seem to me things to be avoided if they bring in their train greater pain, and those pains things to be sought, which bring in their train greater pleasures.[1]

(*a*) Health is a precious thing, and the only thing which deserves, in truth, that we should expend, not only time, sweat, labour, and wealth, but even life, in its pursuit; because without it life comes to be grievous and harmful to us. Pleasure, wisdom, learning, and virtue, without it, lose their

[1] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 33; Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Epicurus.*

lustre, and vanish; and to the most solid and laboured arguments by which philosophy may desire to impress upon us another view we have only to oppose the figure of Plato stricken by the falling sickness or an apoplexy, and, putting that case, defy him to assist himself with the noble and abundant faculties of his mind. Any road that would lead to health would not be called by me either rough or costly. But I have some other signs that make me strangely distrust all this business.[1] I do not say that there may not be some skill in it; that there may not be, amongst so many of nature's works, things adapted to the preservation of our health — that is certain.[2] (*b*) I am well aware that there are some simples that create moisture, others dryness; I know from experience both that radishes cause windiness, and that senna leaves relax the bowels. I know of many such facts, as I know that mutton nourishes me and that wine warms me; and Solon said that eating was, like other drugs, a medicine for the disease of hunger.[3] I do not disallow the profit that we derive from the world, nor do I doubt the power and fertility of Nature, and her conformity to our needs. I see clearly that the pike and the swallow fare well with her. I distrust the surmises of our minds, of our learning and skill, in favour of which we have abandoned her and her laws, and in which we know not how to keep within moderation and bounds.

(*c*) As we call by the name of justice the mixing together[4] of the first laws that fall into our hands, and the dispensing and use of these, which are often very unsuitable and unreasonable; and as those who make mock of this justice, and blame it, do not, nevertheless, mean to insult that noble virtue, but solely to condemn the abuse and profanation of that sacred title; so, in like manner, in medicine, I greatly honour that glorious name, what it suggests, what it promises, so useful to mankind; but what it designates amongst us, I neither honour nor value.

[1] *Toute cette marchandise.*

[2] In 1580: *Mais je dy que ce qui s'en void en practique, il y a grand dangier que ce soit pure imposture, j'en croy leurs confraires, Fioravant et Paracelse.*

[3] See Plutarch, *Banquet of the seven Sages.*

[4] *La pastissage.*

(*a*) In the first place, experience makes me fear it; for, so far as my knowledge goes, I find no kind of men so quickly sick and so slowly cured as those who are under the jurisdiction of medicine. Their very health is impaired and marred by enforced diet. Physicians are not content to have the control of sickness: they make health sick, in order to make sure that there is no escape from their authority at any time. From constant and perfect health do they not draw occasion for a severe illness to come? I have been sick often enough; without their assistance, I have found my sicknesses — and I have tried almost all kinds — as easy to endure and as brief as any other man; and yet I have not mixed therewith the bitterness of their drugs. My health [1] is free and perfect, without rules and without other schooling than from my habits and my pleasure. Every place is a good one for me to stay at, for I need no other conveniences when I am ill than those which I need when I am well. I am not impatient at being without a doctor, without an apothecary, and without assistance, which I see most men to be more distressed by than by the malady itself. What! they themselves,[2] do they show us, in the fortune and length of their lives, testimony to any manifest effect of their art? [3]

There is no nation which has not existed many ages without medicine, and those the first ages, that is to say, the best and happiest; and the tenth part of the world still makes no use of it to this hour. Countless nations know it not, where people live both more healthfully and longer than they do here; and among us the common people live happily without it. The Romans had existed six hundred years before accepting it;[4] but, after having made trial of it, they expelled it from their city through the management of Cato the Censor, who showed how well he could do without it, having lived eighty-five years, and having kept his wife alive to extreme old age, not without physic, but, indeed, without a phy-

[1] Presumably, he means his *general* health.

[2] Physicians.

[3] The same idea is found in Cornelius Agrippa, *Of the uncertainty and vanity of the sciences*, LXXXIII; as are also many of those in the following pages.

[4] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXIX, 1.

sician;[1] for every thing that is healthful for our life may be called physic. He kept his family in health, says Plutarch, by the use, if I remember aright, of hare's meat;[2] as the Arcadians, Pliny says, cure all maladies with cow's milk.[3] (*c*) And the Libyans, Herodotus says, universally enjoy unusual health, from the custom they have, when children, of cauterising and burning the veins of the head and temples, after they have reached the age of four years, whereby they prevent, for their whole life, all forms of catarrh.[4] (*a*) And the villagers of this region use for all maladies only the strongest wine they can get, mixed with much saffron and spice; always with the same success. And, to speak the truth, in all this diversity and confusion of prescriptions, what other purpose and effect is there, after all, than to void the bowels? which a thousand household simples can do. (*b*) And yet I know not whether this is so beneficial as they say, and whether our constitution has not need of the residue of its excrements to a certain degree, as wine has of its lees for its preservation. You often see healthy men seized with vomiting or diarrhœa in consequence of some external mishap, and make a great discharge of excrement, without any preceding need and without any subsequent benefit, nay, even with impairment and injury to their health. (*c*) It was from the great Plato that I learned, not long since, that of the three kinds of involuntary bodily actions which belong to us, the last and the worst is that of purging, which no man, if he be not a fool, should undertake except in extreme necessity.[5] We stir up and rouse the disease by opposing it.[6] It should be the manner of living that gently weakens it and guides it to an end; the violent clawings of the drug and the disease are always to our prejudice, since the quarrel is fought out in us and the drug is an untrustworthy helper,

[1] But Pliny says that the (Greek) physicians were not banished until long after Cato's death. Montaigne doubtless got his idea from the treatise of Agrippa just cited.

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Cato the Censor*.

[3] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXV, 53; copied textually by C. Agrippa, *ubi supra*.

[4] See Herodotus, IV, 187.

[5] See Plato, *Timæus*.

[6] *On va troublant et esveillant le mal par oppositions contreres.*

by its nature hostile to our health, and which has access to our domain only by disturbance there. Let matters rest a bit. The order of things which takes care of fleas and moles also takes care of men when they have the same patience as fleas and moles in letting themselves be governed. In vain do we shout, "Bihore!" [1] It is a good way to make ourselves hoarse, but not to hasten matters. The order of things is proud and pitiless. Our fear, our despair alienate it and delay its coming to our aid, instead of inviting it to do so. It is bound to let disease as well as health run its course. It will not allow itself to be corrupted in favour of the one to the prejudice of the rights of the other; it would fall into disorder. In God's name, let us follow it! let us follow! It leads those who follow it; those who do not follow, them it drags along,[2] and with them their fury and their physic. Order a purge for your brain; it will be better employed there than in your stomach.

(*a*) Some one asked a Lacedæmonian what had kept him so long in health. "Ignorance of medicine," he replied.[3] And the Emperor Hadrian exclaimed constantly as he was dying, that the crowd of doctors had killed him.[4] (*b*) A bad wrestler turned doctor. "Take courage," said Diogenes to him; "you are wise; you will now put in the ground those who have heretofore put you there." [5] (*a*) But they have this advantage, according to Nicocles,[6] that the sun lights up their successes and the earth hides their failures; and, more than that, they have a very profitable way of making use of all sorts of happenings; for that which Fortune, that which Nature, or some other external cause (of which the number is infinite) produces within us of good and salutary, it is the privilege of Medicine to attribute to herself. All the fortunate results that befall the patient who is under her authority he owes to her. The causes that have cured me, and

[1] A Gascon term, from *via foras*. "A word or voice wherewith French carters hasten on their horses." — Cotgrave.

[2] See Seneca, *Epistles* 107 and 77.15.

[3] See Cornelius Agrippa, *ubi supra*.

[4] See *Ibid*. Agrippa took it from Xiphilin, *Life of Hadrian*.

[5] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Diogenes*.

[6] See the *Collection of the Monks Antonius and Maximus* (CXLVI), printed at the end of Stobæus.

have cured many others who do not call physicians to their aid, they [1] claim as belonging to those subject to them; and as for the mischances, they either disown them altogether, or attribute the disaster to the patient by reasonings so futile that they take care never to fail to have a goodly number of this kind: "He uncovered his arm"; (*b*) "He heard the rumbling of a coach";

rhedarum transitus arcto
Vicorum inflexu; [2]

(*a*) "His window has been opened"; "He lay on the left side"; or "Some painful thought passed through his head." In fine, a word, a dream, a glance seems to them a sufficient excuse to acquit them of mistake. Or, if they choose, they make use even of our growing worse and worse, and achieve their ends by this other means that can never fail them, which is, when the disease is intensified by their administering, to satisfy us with the assurance they give us that it would have been very much worse without their remedies. The man whom, from a cold, they have thrown into a quotidian fever, but for them would have had a continual fever. They take no care not to do their work ill, since the harm they do turns to their profit. Really they are well advised in requiring the sick man to give himself up to a favourable confidence; [3] it must needs be, in truth, sincere, and very supple, to fit with fancies so difficult of belief.

(*b*) Plato said very fitly that it belonged only to physicians to lie with all freedom, since our health is attached to their empty and false promises.[4] (*a*) Æsop, an author of very rare excellence, all whose beauties few persons discover, is delightful when he puts before us the tyrannical authority

[1] The physicians.

[2] The passing of wheels in the turns of narrow streets. — Juvenal, III, 236.

[3] *De requerir du malade une application de creance favorable.*

[4] See Plato, *Republic*, book III. Montaigne makes the curious mistake of taking literally a sentence in which Plato uses the words *medicamentum* and *medicus* metaphorically; as is made evident by the next sentence: "The rulers of the state are the only persons who should have the privilege of lying . . . they may be allowed to lie for the good of the state."

that they [1] usurp over those poor souls enfeebled and prostrated by pain and fear; for he narrates that a sick man, being asked by his doctor what effect he felt from the drugs that he had given him, replied: "I have sweated profusely." — "That is good," said the doctor. Later, he asked him again how he had felt since. "I have been extremely cold," he said; "indeed, I have shivered violently." — "That is good," again answered the doctor. Still a third time he asked him how he was. "I feel," he said, "swollen and puffed up as with dropsy." — "That is well," declared the doctor. One of his household presently afterward making enquiry of him as to his condition, "Of a surety, my friend," he replied, "by dint of getting better, I am dying." There was in Egypt a very just law by which the physician took charge of his patient the first three days at the risk and chances of the patient; but when three days had passed, it was at his own risk; [2] for what sense is there in Æsculapius, their master, being struck by lightning for having brought Helen from death to life,[3] —

(*b*) Nam pater omnipotens, aliquem indignatus ab umbris
Mortalem infernis ad lumina surgere vitæ,
Ipse repertorem medicinæ talis et artis
Fulmine Phœbigenam stygias detrusit ad undas,[4] —

(*a*) while his disciples are absolved who send so many souls from life to death? (*b*) A physician boasted to Nicocles that his profession enjoyed great authority. "Truly, that is

[1] Physicians. See *Fable* 13, "The Sick Man and the Physician." Cf. what Montaigne says of Æsop's fables in Book II, chap. 10 (Vol. II, p. 138).

[2] See Cornelius Agrippa, *ubi supra*.

[3] The accepted myth is that it was Hippolytus who was resuscitated by Æsculapius. The name of Helen would seem to have been suggested by Pliny's phrase: *Quoniam Tyndareum revocavisset in vitam* (*Nat. Hist.*, XXIX, 1). Montaigne corrected it before 1595, and "Hippolitus" is substituted in the later editions.

[4] Then the omnipotent Father, indignant that a mortal should rise from the shades of the lower world to the light of life, struck with a thunderbolt the son of Phœbus, the discoverer of such a remedy and such an art, and precipitated him to the waves of the Styx. — Virgil, *Æneid*, VII, 770.

evident," [1] said Nicocles, "since it can kill so many people with impunity." [2]

(*a*) Yet, had I been of their counsel, I should have made my art more sacred and mysterious; they began well enough, but they have not ended so.[3] It was a good beginning to have made gods and demons the authors of their science, to have assumed a language of their own, a form of writing of their own; (*c*) although philosophy perceives that it is folly to counsel a man to his advantage in an unintelligible way:

Ut si quis medicus imperet ut sumat

Terrigenam, herbigradam, domiportam, sanguine cassam.[4]

(*a*) It was a useful rule in their profession, and one which accompanies all fantastical, vain, and supernatural professions, that the patient's faith must anticipate, with earnest hope and assurance, their action and operation. Which rule they follow even to this point, that they deem the most ignorant and dull physician more fit for the man who has confidence in him, than the most experienced who is unknown to him. The choice even of the greater part of their drugs is somewhat mysterious and divinatory: the left foot of a tortoise, the urine of a lizard, the excrement of an elephant, the liver of a mole, blood taken from under the right wing of a white pigeon; and for us who are colical (so disdainfully do they wrong our woeful case), the pulverised dung of a rat, and other such fooleries, which have rather the aspect of magical sorcery than of solid learning. I say nothing of the uneven number of their pills, the setting apart of certain days and festivals in the year, the noting of certain hours to gather the herbs of their compounds, and the austere and circumspect affectation of their bearing and countenance, which Pliny himself derides.[5] But they have failed, I must say, in that they have not added to this fine

[1] *C'est mon.*

[2] See the *Collection of the Monks Antonius and Maximus.*

[3] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXIX, 1.

[4] As if a physician were to order his patient to devour an offspring of the earth that creeps on the grass, carries his house, and is bloodless. — Cicero, *De Div.*, II, 64. Cicero adds: *Potius quam hominum more cochleam dicere:* "Instead of saying, like everybody else, a snail."

[5] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXIX, 1.

beginning the making their meetings and consultations more sacred and more secret; no uninitiated man should have access to them, any more than to the secret ceremonies of Æsculapius. For it comes to pass from this error that their irresolution, the weakness of their arguments, conjectures, and foundations, the bitterness of their disputes, full of hatred, jealousy, and private considerations, being thereby disclosed to every one, a man must be wonderfully blind if he does not feel in great jeopardy in their hands. Who ever sees a physician make use of another physician's prescription without taking something away from it, or adding something to it? [1] Thereby they evince great distrust of their art, and shew us that they pay more heed to their reputation, and consequently to their profit, than to the welfare of their patient. Of their teachers, that one was wiser who enjoined upon them of old that one physician alone should undertake the treatment of a sick man; for, if he do nothing that avails, the disgrace to the art of medicine will not be very great because of the failure of one man; and, on the other hand, the glory will be great if he meets with success; whereas, when there are many, they discredit the profession [2] at every turn, inasmuch as it happens that they more often do harm than good.[3] They should be content with the perpetual disagreement that exists in the opinions of the chief ancient masters and authors of that science, which is known only to men versed in letters, without displaying also to the people the controversies and instability of judgement which they foster and perpetuate among themselves.

Would you see an example of the ancient disagreement in medicine? Hierophilus places the original cause of disease in the humours of the body;[4] Erasistratus, in the blood of the arteries; Asclepiades, in the invisible atoms passing through our pores; Alcmæon, in the superabundance or lack of corporal forces; Diocles, in the inequality of the elements of the body and in the quality of the air we breathe; Strato, in the

[1] See Cornelius Agrippa, *ubi supra.*
[2] *Le mestier.*
[3] See *Ibid.*
[4] All these opinions are taken from the same treatise of Agrippa.

large amount, rawness, and corruption of the food we eat; Hippocrates places it in the mind.[1] There is one of their friends, whom they know better than I, who declares, on this point, that the most important science that we make use of, that which has charge of our maintenance and our health, is, by ill-luck, the most uncertain, the most confused, and perplexed by the greatest changes.[2] There is no great danger in making a mistake about the height of the sun, or as to a fraction in astronomical computations; but here, where our whole existence is at stake, it is not wise to abandon ourselves to the mercy of winds blowing from so many quarters.

Before the Peloponnesian War there was not much heard of this science. Hippocrates brought it into credit; all that he had established Chrysippus overturned; later, Erasistratus, Aristotle's grandson, did the same by all that Chrysippus had written. After these came the Empirics, who took a part entirely different from the ancients in the managing of this art. When the credit of these last began to grow stale, Hierophilus put into use another sort of medical practice, which Asclepiades combatted and destroyed in his turn. In their order, the opinions of Themisto gained authority, and then those of Musa, and still later those of Vectius Valens, a physician famous through the relations he had with Messalina. In the time of Nero the sovereignty of medicine fell to Thessalus, who abolished and condemned all that had been maintained concerning it till his day. His doctrine was overthrown by Crinas of Marseilles, who introduced the novelty of regulating all medicinal doings by the ephemerides and the movements of the stars — eating, sleeping, and drinking at such hours as it pleased the moon and Mercury. His authority was very soon supplanted by Charinus, a physician of the same city of Marseilles. The latter opposed, not only the old methods of physic, but also the use of public hot baths, a custom for so many pre-

[1] *Aux esprits.*

[2] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXIX, 1. Pliny's words are: *Mirum et indignum protinus fuit, nullam Artium Medicina inconstantiorem fuisse, et etiamnum sæpius mutari quum sit fructiosior nulla.* But he uses *fructiosior* in the sense of "lucrative."

vious ages. He made men bathe in cold water, even in winter, and immersed sick persons in the native water of brooks.[1]

Down to the time of Pliny no Roman had ever condescended to practise medicine; it was in the hands of foreigners and Greeks, as it is among us Frenchmen of those who affect Latin;[2] for, as a very great physician says,[3] we do not readily accept the medicine that we understand, any more than the value of the herbs[4] that we gather.[5] If the nations from which we obtain guaiacum, sarsaparilla, and china-root have physicians, we may suppose that, by reason of this same habit of attaching value to novelty, rarity, and dearness, they eagerly welcome our cabbages and our parsley; for who would dare to disdain things that were sought at such a distance, at the risk of such long and perilous peregrination? Since these mutations of old in medicine, there have been innumerable others, even to our own time; and oftenest complete and universal mutations, like those which Paracelsus, Fioravanti, and Argenterius[6] produced in our day; for they do not change one prescription only, but, as I am told, the whole frame and regimen of the body of physic, accusing of ignorance and imposture those who have practised it before them. I leave it to you to imagine what becomes of the poor patient! If, indeed, we were assured, when they mistake, that, if it does us no good, it does us no harm, it would be a very reasonable arrangement, to risk obtaining some gain without putting ourselves in any danger of loss. (*b*) Æsop tells this tale: that a man who had bought a Moorish slave, thinking that his colour had come by accident and from ill treatment by his former master, caused him to be medically treated very carefully, with many baths and beverages; the result was that the Moor's dusky hue

[1] This whole history of medicine is taken from the chapter of Pliny's *Natural History* frequently cited above.

[2] *Latineurs.*

[3] It is not known to whom Montaigne refers.

[4] *La drogue.*

[5] In 1580 to 1588: *si elle nous est inconnue, si elle ne vient d'outre mer, et ne nous est apportée de quelque lointaine region, elle n'a point de force.*

[6] Paracelsus, 1493–1541; Fioravanti died in 1588; Argenterius, — Jean Argentier de Quiers, — 1513–1572.

was in no wise improved, but he wholly lost his former health.[1]

(*a*) How often it happens that we see physicians imputing to one another the deaths of their patients! I remember a wide-spread malady in the towns in my vicinity a few years ago — deadly and very contagious; this storm having passed over, which had carried away an infinite number of people, one of the most famous physicians in the whole region published a pamphlet on this subject, wherein he reconsiders their having used blood-letting, and confesses that to have been one of the chief causes of the mischief that had been done. Furthermore, their authors maintain that there is no medicine in which there may not be something harmful; and if even those which are of service to us injure us in some way, what must those do which they administer to us altogether unseasonably? For my own part, even if there were nothing else, I think that for those who hate the taste of medicine it may be a hazardous act and injurious to swallow it at so annoying a moment, with so much reluctance; and I believe that so doing greatly tries the sick man at a time when he has so much need of repose. Moreover, if we consider the incidents to which they[2] commonly ascribe the cause of our sicknesses, they are so slight and vague, that I infer therefrom that a very little error in the administration of their drugs may do us much harm.

Again, if the mistake of the physician be important, we are badly off, for it is very improbable that he does not fall into the same mistake often: he requires too many details, considerations, and circumstances to adjust his purpose accurately.[3] He must learn the sick man's constitution, his temperament, his humours, his propensities, his actions, his very thoughts and fancies; he must inform himself as to the external conditions — the nature of the place, the quality of the air and of the weather, the position of the planets and their influences; and he must know, as to the malady, its causes, its symptoms, its stages, its critical days; as to the drug, its weight, its strength, its native place, its appearance, its age, and its compounding; and all these details he

[1] See *Fable* 76, "The Ethiopian."

[2] That is, physicians.

[3] *Pour affuter justement son dessein.*

must know how to measure and to conform one to another, so as to produce a perfect proportion of each part in respect to the whole.[1] Wherein if he fail ever so little, if of so many influences a single one goes awry, behold, that is enough to destroy us. God knows how difficult it is to learn most of these things: for example, how shall he recognise the symptom peculiar to the disease, each disease being capable of an infinite number of symptoms? What discussions and controversies do they not have among themselves, as to the interpretation of the urine! Otherwise, whence would arise the constant altercation we see amongst them in the recognition of diseases? How shall we excuse this error, into which they fall so often, of taking one disease for another?[2] In the sicknesses that I have had, little obscurity as there was in them, I have never found three doctors in agreement. I note more readily the examples that concern myself. Recently, at Paris, a gentleman was cut[3] by order of physicians, in whom no more stone was found in his bladder than in his hand; and there, likewise, a bishop, who was a very warm friend of mine, had been incessantly urged, by most of the physicians he called in counsel, to have himself cut; I joined my persuasions, trusting in others. When he was dead, and his body was opened, they found that his malady was in the kidneys. They are less excusable about this disease, because it is somewhat palpable. It is in this respect that surgery seems to me much more certain, because it sees and touches what it does;[4] there is less conjecturing and guessing, while physicians have no *speculum matricis* which reveals to them the brain, the lungs, and the liver.

The very promises of medicine are incredible; for, having to provide for diverse and opposed contingencies, which often harry us at the same time, and which have an almost necessary relation, as heat in the liver and chill in the stomach, they set about persuading us that, of the ingredients employed, this one will warm the stomach, this other will cool the liver; one is charged to go straight to the kidneys, indeed even to the bladder, without exhibiting its

[1] *Pour en engendrer une parfaicte symmetrie.*
[2] *De prendre martre pour renard.*
[3] For the stone.
[4] See Cornelius Agrippa, *ubi supra.*

workings elsewhere, and maintaining its strength and virtue in that long road full of obstacles, till it arrives at the place where it is destined, by its occult properties, to be of service; this other will dry the brain; that one will moisten the lungs. Having compounded a potion of all this collection, is it not a kind of delusion to hope that these virtues will divide and separate themselves from this confusion and medley, to carry out such diverse orders? I should immensely fear that they would lose or exchange their billets,[1] and cause disturbance in the lodgings assigned them. And who can believe that, in that liquid mixture, these properties do not vitiate, blend, and alter one another? And consider that the making up of this prescription is another man's office,[2] to whose trustiness and mercy we still again abandon our life.

(*c*) As we have doublet-makers and breeches-makers to clothe us, and are so much the better served because each undertakes only his special business, and his ability is more restrained and bridled than that of a tailor, who includes every thing; and as, in the matter of food, those of high rank have, for greater ease in their households, distinct offices of soup-makers and roasters, in which a cook who takes charge of every thing can not so perfectly succeed; so, in the matter of curing, the Egyptians did well to reject the profession of medicine in general, and to divide it up;[3] for each disease, for each part of the body, its workman; since this part was much more fitly and less confusedly treated because it was considered specially by itself. Ours[4] do not consider that he who provides for every thing provides for nothing; that the complete government of this little world is beyond their powers.[5] Fearing to stay the course of a dysentery, lest they cause a fever, they killed a friend of mine who was worth more than the whole pack of them.[6] They balance their conjectures against present ills, and, in order not to cure the brain at the expense of the stomach, they offend the stomach and impair the brain by these disorderly and dissentient drugs.

[1] *Ethiquetes.*
[2] That is, the apothecary's.
[3] See Herodotus, II, 84.
[4] That is, our physicians.
[5] *Indigestible.*
[6] La Boëtie, who died of dysentery in 1563.

(*a*) As for the variety and weakness of the arguments of this profession, they are more evident than in any other. Aperitives are beneficial to a colicky man, inasmuch as, opening the passages and dilating them, they give an exit to that sticky substance of which gravel and stone are formed, and lead downward to the kidneys that which is beginning to harden and collect. Aperitives are dangerous to a colicky man, because, by opening the passages and dilating them, they give entry toward the kidneys of the substance adapted to form gravel, and, the kidneys readily seizing upon it because of their propensity for it, they can not easily be prevented from detaining much of what has been conveyed thither; furthermore, if by chance there is encountered a body a little larger than it should be to pass through all the narrow passages which are still to be traversed in order to eject it, this body, being jogged by these aperitives and forced into these narrow ducts, will, by stopping them up, lead to a certain and very painful death.

They have a like assuredness in the advice they give us as to our regimen of living. It is well to make water often, for we see, as a fact, that by letting it remain we give it time to deposit its solids and its lees, which will serve as material to form the stone in the bladder; it is well not to make water often, for the heavy solids that it carries with it will not be drained away unless the flow is violent; as we see, in fact, that a torrent that rushes violently sweeps much more completely the place where it passes than does a gentle and sluggish brook. Pareillement il est bon d'avoir souvent affaire aus femmes, car cela ouvre les passages et achemine la grave et le sable. Il est bien aussi mauvais, car cela eschaufe les reins, les lasse et affoiblit. [1] It is well to take

[1] The following pages, down to "everywhere else in that art" (page 219), were mostly added in 1582. The text of 1580 reads: *Somme ilz n'ont nul discours, qui ne soit capable de telles oppositions. Quant au jugement de l'operation des drogues, il est autant ou plus incertain. J'ay esté deux fois boyre des eaus chaudes de noz montaignes; et m'y suis rangé, par ce que c'est une potion naturelle, simple, et non mixtionnée, qui au moins n'est point dangereuse, si elle est vaine; et qui de fortune s'est rencontrée n'estre aucunement ennemi de mon goust (il est vray que je la prens selon mes regles, non selon celles des medecins) outre ce que le plaisir des visites de plusieurs parens et amis, que j'ay en chemin, et des compaignies qui s'y rendent, et de la beauté de l'assiette du pais, m'y attire.*

hot baths, because they relax and soften the places where the gravel and stone remain; it is bad, also, inasmuch as this application of natural heat assists the kidneys in baking and hardening and petrifying the matter that has settled there. For those who are at public baths it is more healthful to eat in the evening, so that the waters which they have to drink the next morning may have more effect, finding the stomach empty and unobstructed; on the other hand, it is better to eat little at dinner, so as not to disturb the working of the water, which is not yet complete, and to burden the stomach so soon after that other labour, and to leave the business of digesting to the night, which can do it better than the day, when the body and the mind are in constant movement and action.[1]

Ces eaux la ne font nul miracle sans doute, et tous les effectz estranges qu'on en rapporte je ne les croy pas; car pendant que j'y ay esté, il s'est semé plusieurs telz bruits que j'ay decouvers faus m'en informant un peu curieusement. Mais le monde se pipe aisêement de ce qu'il desire. Il ne leur faut pas oster aussi qu'elles n'esveillent l'appetit et ne facilitent la digestion, et ne nous prestent quelque nouvelle alegresse, si on n'y va du tout abatu de forces. Mais moy je n'y ay estê ny ne suis deliberê d'y aller que sain et avecques plaisir. Or quant à ce que je dis de la difficultê, qui se presente au jugement de l'operation, en voycy l'exemple. Je fus premierement à Aiguescaudes, de celles la je n'en sentis nul effet, nulle purgation apparente; mais je fus un an entier aprez en estre revenu sans aucun ressentiment de colique, pour laquelle j'y estoy allê. Depuis je fus à Banieres, celles-cy me firent vuyder force sable, et me tindrent le ventre long temps apres fort lache. Mais elles ne me garantirent ma santê que deux mois: car apres cela j'ay estê tresmal traictê de mon mal. Je demanderois sur ce tesmoignage, ausquelles mon medecin est d'avis que je me fie le plus, ayant ces divers argumentz et circonstances pour les unes et pour les autres. Qu'on ne crie pas donc plus apres ceux, qui en cete incertitude se laissent gouverner à leur appetit et au simple conseil de nature. Or ainsi, quand ils nous conseillent une chose plus tost qu'une autre, quand ils nous ordonnent les choses aperitivez, comme sont les eaux chaudes, ou qu'ils nous les deffendent, ils le font d'une pareille incertitude, et remettent sans doubte à la mercy de la fortune l'evenement de leur conseil: n'estant en leur puissance ny de leur art de se respondre de la mesure des corps sableus, qui se couvent en noz reins; la où une bien legiere differance de leur grandeur peut produire en l'effet de nostre santê des conclusions contradictoires. Par cet exemple l'on peut juger de la forme de leurs discours. Mais pour les presser plus vivement, il ne fauldroit pas un homme si ignorant come je suis de leur art.

[1] Illustrations of Montaigne's remarks here and below may be found in his *Journal de Voyage*, where he describes his sojourn at the baths of La Villa.

That is the way they idly talk and trifle at our expense in all their utterances. (*b*) And they could not put before me any proposition against which I could not frame one to the contrary of equal strength. (*a*) So let there be no more outcry about those who, in this confusion, allow themselves to be quietly guided by their inclination and by the advice of nature, and commit themselves to the common fortune. I have seen, through the opportunity afforded by my travels, almost all the famous baths of Christendom; and some years since I began to make use of them; for, in general, I think bathing to be healthful, and I believe that we incur our slight discomforts of health from having lost the habit — which was generally followed in times past amongst almost all nations, and still is in many — of washing the body every day; and I can not but believe that we are much less well off for keeping our limbs thus becrusted and our pores checked with dirt. And as for drinking the waters, in the first place, it happens that they are not at all disagreeable to me; in the second place, they are natural and simple, which at least is not dangerous even if it be useless; whereof I take for proof the infinite number of peoples, of all races and constitutions, who flock to them. And although I have not perceived any extraordinary and miraculous effects from them, — rather, by enquiring a little more carefully than is commonly done, I have discovered to be unfounded and false all the rumours of such results which are spread broadcast in those places and which are believed there (as the world is easily cheated about what it desires), — yet I have seen very few persons who have been made worse by these springs; and it can not be honestly denied that they excite the appetite, facilitate digestion, and give us some fresh lustiness, if we go not thither too much broken down, which I advise against doing. They have not the power to rebuild a heavy ruin; they can stay a slight leaning, or provide against the menace of some deterioration. He who does not carry thither sufficient lustiness to be able to take pleasure in the society found there, and in the walks and activities to which he is invited by the beauty of the regions where these springs are commonly situated, doubtless loses the best and surest part of their effect. For this reason I have, to this day, chosen to

abide at, and make use of, those where there is most amenity of situation, most agreeableness of lodgings, of table, and of company, as in France those of Banieres; those of Plombieres on the frontiers of Germany and Lorraine; in Switzerland, those of Baden; in Tuscany, those of Lucca, and especially Della Villa, which I have made use of oftenest and at different seasons.

Each nation has its own opinion touching their use,[1] and wholly different rules and methods of making use of them; and, according to my experience, the result is almost the same. Drinking the water is not at all thought well of in Germany; for all diseases they bathe, and lie soaking[2] in the water almost from sun to sun. In Italy, if they drink nine days, they bathe at least thirty, and commonly drink the water mixed with other drugs to aid its operation. Here they order us to walk, to digest it; there they keep them in bed when they have taken it, until they have voided it, constantly warming their stomach and feet. As the Germans have their special custom of being generally scarified all over with cuppings[3] in the bath, so the Italians have their *doccie*, which are certain streams of hot water conveyed through pipes, by means of which they bathe, during a month, either the head or the stomach, or such other part of the body as they are treating, for an hour in the morning, and the same in the afternoon. There is an infinity of other differences of custom in each country; or, to say better, there is almost no resemblance between them. It is evident that this kind of medical treatment to which alone I have turned, although it is the least artificial, yet has its fair share of the confusion and uncertainty which is seen everywhere else in that art.

Poets say whatever they choose, with more significance and grace — witness these two epigrams: —

> Alcon hesterno signum Jovis attigit. Ille,
> Quamvis marmoreus, vim patitur medici.

[1] That is, the use of medicinal springs.

[2] *Sont à grenouiller.*

[3] *Ont de particulier de se faire generallement tous corneter et vantouser avec scarification.*

Ecce hodie, jussus transferri ex æde vetusta,
Effertur, quamvis sit Deus atque lapis.[1]

And again:

Lotus nobiscum est hilaris, cœnavit et idem,
Inventus mane est mortuus Andragoras.
Tam subitæ mortis causam, Faustine, requiris?
In somnis medicum viderat Hermocratem.[2]

Hereupon I will relate two stories. The baron of Caupene in Chalosse and I hold in common the right of appointment to a benefice of great extent, at the foot of our mountains, called Lahontan. It is with the people of this corner of the world as it is said to have been with those of the Valley of Angrougne: they had a life of their own, manners, apparel, and morals of their own; they were ruled and governed by certain special regulations and customs handed down from father to son, to which they submitted without other compulsion than that of respect for their long usage. This little community had continued from all antiquity in so fortunate a condition that no neighbouring magistrate had taken the trouble to acquaint himself with their doings, no lawyer was employed to advise them, nor any outsider called upon to adjust their quarrels; and never had any one of that region been seen asking alms. They avoided alliances and intercourse with the outer world, in order not to impair the purity of their government; until, as they relate, one amongst them, within the memory of their fathers, having his soul spurred by a noble ambition, took it into his head, in order to bring his name into credit and good repute, to make one of his children a Maître Jean or Maître Pierre;[3] and having had him taught to write in some neighbouring town, turned him at last into a fine village notary. This man, having ac-

[1] Yesterday Alcon touched the statue of Jupiter. Though of marble, it was affected by the physician's force. To-day, behold, he is taken from his ancient temple and carried out to burial, though a god and stone. — Ausonius, *Epigram* 74.

[2] Andragoras bathed and gaily supped with us; the next morning he was found dead. Do you ask, Faustinus, the cause of so sudden a death? In sleep he had seen the physician Hermocrates. — Martial, VI, 53.

[3] That is to say, a lawyer.

quired this dignity,[1] began to disdain their ancient customs and to put into their heads the ostentatious display of the region beyond the mountains. The first of his comrades who had been robbed of the horns of his goat was advised by him to seek satisfaction from the king's judges thereabouts; and after this man, another, until he had debased the whole land. On the heels of this corruption they say that there followed immediately another, of worse consequence, by means of a physician who conceived the desire to marry one of their daughters, and to live amongst them. This man began by teaching them the names of fevers, of rheums, and of impostumes, the location of the heart, of the liver, and of the intestines, which was knowledge until then very far removed from their ken; and in place of garlic, with which they had learned to drive away all bodily ills, however severe and extreme they might be, he accustomed them to take unfamiliar concoctions for a cough or cold, and began to trade, not on their health only, but also on their death. They swear that only since then have they perceived that evening damp made the head dull; that to drink when hot was harmful, and that autumn winds were more injurious than those of spring; that after using those new medicines they were overwhelmed by a legion of unwonted diseases; and that they observed a general falling off in their former vigour, and that their lives were shortened by half. This is the first of my tales.

The other is that, before my subjection to the stone, hearing much value ascribed by many persons to he-goat's blood, as it were a celestial manna sent in these latter ages for the protection and preservation of human life, and hearing it spoken of by men of intelligence as an admirable drug and of infallible operation, I, who have always deemed myself exposed to all the chances that can befall any other man, was pleased, when in perfect health, to provide myself with this miraculous thing, and gave orders to my household that a he-goat should be nurtured for me according to the prescription; for it is necessary that he should be weaned [2] in the hottest months of the summer, and that he should be given

[1] *Devenu grand;* in 1580 to 1588, *devenu monsieur.*
[2] *Qu'on le retire.*

only laxative herbs to eat and only white wine to drink. I was, by chance, at home the day of his killing; they came to tell me that my cook had found in his belly two or three large balls, which rattled against one another, amongst what he had eaten. I desired to have all his entrails brought before me, and had that stout large sack opened; there came out of it three great lumps, as light as sponges, so that they seemed to be hollow, and hard and firm outside, and spotted with many dull colours; one perfectly round, of the size of a bowling ball; the other two, a little smaller, imperfectly rounded, as if they were in process of forming. I have found, having made enquiry about this of those who are accustomed to opening these animals, that it is a rare and unusual circumstance. It is probable that they are stones closely related to ours; and, if that be so, it is an idle hope for persons with the stone to derive their cure from the blood of a beast which was on its way to death from a like disease. As for saying that the blood does not feel this contagion, and that its wonted property is not changed by it, it is rather to be believed that nothing is engendered in a body save by the combination and participation of all parts; the mass acts as a whole, although one organ may contribute more than another, according to the diversity of their operation. Wherefore there is a great likelihood that in all the organs of that goat there was some petrifying quality. It was not so much from fear of the future and for myself that I was interested in this experiment, as it was because it happens in my own household, as well as in many others, that the women in it store up such trivial druggeries to aid the common people by them, using the same prescription for fifty diseases, and such a prescription as they do not take themselves, and yet are triumphant over happy results.

In the main, I honour physicians, not, according to the precept, out of necessity,[1] — for to this passage is opposed another, wherein the prophet reproves King Asa for having had recourse to a physician,[2] — but for love of the men themselves, having known many excellent ones and worthy

[1] See *Ecclesiasticus*, XXXVIII, 1: *Honora medicum propter necessitatem.*

[2] See *II Chronicles*, XVI, 12.

to be loved. It is not they against whom I bear a grudge, it is against their art; nor do I greatly blame them for profiting by our folly, for most of the world does likewise. Many vocations both less and more worthy than theirs have no foundation and support but in public abuses. I call them, when I am ill, to bear me company, if they chance to be at hand at the time, and ask to be entertained by them; and I pay them as others do. I permit them to order me to keep warmly covered if I like better to be so than otherwise; they may choose between leeks and lettuce, of which it pleases them to have my soup made, and prescribe white wine or red for me; and so with all other things that are indifferent to my appetite and habits.

I know well that this is to do nothing for them, because bitterness and strangeness are elements of the very essence of medicine. Lycurgus prescribed wine for sick Spartans. Why? Because, when well, they hated drinking it; just as a gentleman, a neighbour of mine, uses it as a very salutary drug in his fevers because he mortally hates the taste of it. How many of them [1] we find to be of my humour: despising medicine for their own use and adopting an unconstrained manner of life wholly contrary to that which they prescribe for others. What is this if it be not a manifest abuse of our ignorance? For life and health are no less dear to them than to us, and they would adapt their deeds to their doctrine if they were not themselves aware of its falsity.

It is the fear of death and of pain, impatience with suffering, a frantic and inconsiderate desire of cure, which thus blind us; it is pure cowardice that makes our belief so easy to be imposed upon [2] and so pliable. (*c*) For the majority, however, it is not a matter of belief, so much as of toleration; for I hear them complain and talk about it as we do, but finally they conclude: "But what can I do?" As if patience were in itself a better remedy than impatience.[3] (*a*) Is there any one of those who have acquiesced in this wretched subjection who does not surrender equally to every kind of imposture? who does not put himself at the

[1] Physicians. [2] *Si molle.*

[3] The original form of this clause is uncertain; the editors of 1595 give it the exact opposite of the above meaning.

mercy of any one who has the effrontery to promise him his cure?

(*c*) The Babylonians took their sick to the public square: the common people served as physician, each passer-by being obliged by humanity and good citizenship [1] to enquire about their condition and, according to his experience, to give them some salutary advice.[2] We do almost the same. (*a*) There is not a woman so ignorant that we do not make use of her mumblings and charms; and according to my humour, if I had to accept any remedy, I would accept such a one more readily than any other, inasmuch as, at least, there would be no harm to fear from it. (*c*) What Homer and Plato said of the Egyptians, that they were all physicians,[3] might be said of all people: there is no one who does not boast of some receipt, and who does not risk trying it on his neighbour if he is ready to trust him about it. (*a*) The other day I was in company, when one or another of my associates brought news of a sort of pill compounded of a hundred and more ingredients, by actual count. This excited rejoicing and peculiar satisfaction; for what rock could withstand the force of such a numerous battery? I understand, however, from those who tried it, that not the least little gravel deigned to be moved by it.

I can not leave this paper without saying a word touching the fact that they offer us, as warrant of the infallibility of their drugs, the test they have made of them. The greater part, and, as I believe, more than two thirds, of medicinal virtues consists in the quintessence or hidden properties of herbs, as to which we can have no other instruction than from use; for the most essential part [4] is nothing but a quality of which we can not by our intellect discover the cause. Of such proofs, those which they claim to have acquired by the inspiration of some familiar spirit I am content to accept (for about miracles I never concern myself); or, indeed, the proofs derived from things which, for some other consideration, often come into use by us; as when in wool,

[1] *Civilité.* [2] See Herodotus, I, 197.

[3] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Plato.* For Homer, see *Odyssey*, IV, 231.

[4] *Quinte essence.*

wherewith we are accustomed to clothe ourselves, there happens to be some occult desiccative property which cures kibes on the heel; and as when in radishes, which we eat for nourishment, there is found to be some laxative operation. Galen relates that it befell a leper to be cured by means of some wine he drank, because by chance a snake had crawled into the receptacle. We find in this example the method and a probable guide for attaining knowledge;[1] as also in those about which physicians say that they have been set in the way by the example of some animals. But in the greater part of the different kinds of knowledge[2] to which they say that they were led by fortune, and had no other guide than chance, I find incredible the development of this instruction. I imagine man looking about him at the infinite number of things, plants, animals, metals. I do not see how he would begin his experimenting; and if his first idea fixes itself on the horn of an elk, about which his credulity must be very pliable and easy, he finds himself no less embarrassed as to what to do next. There come to his mind so many diseases and so many circumstances that, before he has reached certainty as to the point of the completion of his knowledge, human wit is nonplussed;[3] and before he has found, amidst that infinity of things, what the quality of the horn is; amongst that infinite number of diseases, epilepsy; amongst the many humours, that of melancholy; amongst the many seasons, winter; amongst the many nations, the French; amongst the many ages, old age; amongst the many celestial mutations, that of the conjunction of Venus and Saturn; amongst the many parts of the body, the finger,[4] — in all this being guided neither by sure token, nor by conjecture, nor by example, nor by divine inspiration, but

[1] *Une conduite vray-semblable à cette experience.*

[2] *Des autres experiences.*

[3] *Le sens humain y perd son latin.*

[4] As some liberty has been taken with the text, to make it more intelligible, the original words are given: *et avant qu'il ait trouvé parmy cette infinité de choses que c'est cette corne; parmy cette infinité de maladies, l'epilepsie; tant de complexions, au melancholique; tant de saisons, en hyver; tant de nations, au François: tant d'aages, en la vieillesse; tant de mutations celestes, en la conjonction de Venus et de Saturne; tant de parties du corps, au doigt.*

solely by the action of fortune, — it must needs have been by a perfectly artificial, regulated, and methodical fortune. And still, if the cure should be achieved, how can it be certain that it was not that the disease had come to its end, or the result of chance, or the effect of something he had that day eaten, or drunk, or touched, or the merit of his grandmother's prayers? Moreover, if this proof had been perfect, how many times was it repeated, and this long string of happenings and concurrences restrung, to deduce therefrom a certain rule? (*b*) If it is deduced, by whom? Of all these millions there are but three men who undertake to record their experiences. Will fate have fallen in with one of them at the opportune moment? How if another, and a hundred others, have had contrary experiences? It may be that we should see some light here, if all the judgements and reasonings of men were known to us. But that three witnesses and three doctors should teach mankind is not reasonable; it would be needful that human nature had selected and deputed them, and that they were by express warrant declared our syndics.

(*a*) To Madame de Duras [1]

Madame, you found me about this writing lately when you came to see me. Because it may happen that these trifles will some time fall into your hands, I desire that they may bear witness that the author feels himself greatly honoured by the favour that you will show them. You will recognise therein the same bearing and the same way of thinking that you have seen in his conversation. Even had I been able to assume some other manner than my usual one, and some other nobler and better appearance, I would not have done so; for I desire to derive from these writings nothing but that they shall present me to your memory as I naturally am. Those same dispositions and faculties, madame, which you have been familiar with, and have welcomed with much more honour and courtesy than they deserve, I desire to lodge (but without alteration or change) in a compact body which may endure for a few years or a few

[1] Marguerite d'Aure de Gramont, the widow of Jean de Durfort, Seigneur de Duras.

days after me, where you will find them again when it shall be your pleasure to refresh your memory of them, without taking the trouble otherwise to remind yourself of them; for they are not worth it. I desire that you should continue the favour of your friendship to me for the same qualities by which it has arisen. I do not at all seek to be better loved and esteemed when dead than while living.

(*b*) The humour of Tiberius was absurd, though common. He took, said Tacitus, more pains to spread his renown in future times than he did to make himself estimable and agreeable to the men of his day.[1] (*c*) If I were one of those to whom the world may owe praise, I would relinquish the debt and have it pay me in advance; let the praises make haste and keep themselves all about me, more profuse than lengthy, more ample than lasting; and let them boldly fade away at the same time with my consciousnesss, and when their sweet sound can no longer reach my ears.

(*a*) It would be a foolish humour, at this moment, when I am about to abandon the commerce of men, to set about bringing myself before them by a new recommendation. I make no account of the goods which I have not been able to employ for the service of my life. Whatever I am, I desire to be so elsewhere than on paper. My skill and my diligence have been employed in making myself of value; my studies, in learning what to do, not how to write. I have devoted all my strength to shaping my life. That is my occupation and my work. I am less a maker of books than of any other affair. I have desired to have sufficient ability for the service of the immediate and essential demands upon me, but not to create from it a storehouse and hoard for my heirs. (*c*) He who is of value, let him shew it in his conduct, in his every-day talk, in dealing with love or with quarrels, in games, in bed, at table, in the management of his affairs and of his household. They whom I see in ragged breeches writing good books would have first mended their breeches if they had taken my advice. Ask a Spartan whether he prefers to be a good rhetorician rather than a good soldier; for my part, I would rather be a good cook, if I had not one at my service.

[1] See Tacitus, *Annals*, VI, 46.

(*a*) Good God, madame, how I should hate such a commendation as that of being a clever man in writing and a nullity and fool in other things! I would rather be a fool all through than have chosen so ill the way to employ my worth. Therefore, I am so far from expecting to gain any new honour by these dull pages, that I shall do well if I do not lose what little of it I now have. For, besides that this dead and dumb picture will show less than [1] my natural being, it has no relation to my best estate, since I have much fallen away from my former vigour and activity, becoming withered and stale. I am near the bottom of the cask, which smells now of dregs and lees.

For the rest, madame, I should not have dared to touch so boldly on the mysteries of medicine, considering the esteem in which you and so many others hold it, had I not been shown the path by its authors themselves. I believe that there are of these, among the old Latin writers, but two, Pliny and Celsus. If these some day are in your hands, you will find that they speak much more roughly of their profession than I do; I but pinch it, they cut its throat. Pliny laughs at them,[2] among other things, for this, that, when they were at the end of their rope, they devised that excellent shift of sending the patients whom they had exercised and tormented to no purpose with their drugs and diets, some to the help of prayers and miracles, others to hot baths.[3] (Do not be offended, madame; this is not said of those of our parts, who are under the protection of your family and who are all Gramontoises.)[4] They have a third device for ridding themselves of us, and freeing themselves from the reproaches that we might address to them for the little improvement in our ills, which they have had so long in charge that they have no invention left to hold us with: it is, to send us to seek the goodness of the air of some other region. Enough of this, madame; you will permit me to resume the thread of my discourse, from which I have digressed to talk with you.

[1] *Desrobera à.*

[2] That is, physicians.

[3] See Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, XXIX, 1.

[4] The edition of 1580 adds: *Les Montaignes ou elles sont assises ne tonent et ne retentissent rien que Gramont.*

It was, I think, Pericles, who, being asked how he was, replied, "You can judge by these," pointing to the amulets he wore on his neck and arms. He meant to imply that he was very sick, since he had gone so far as to have recourse to things so useless, and to allow himself to be arrayed in such fashion.[1] I do not say that I may not be brought some day to this absurd notion of placing my life and my health at the mercy and control of physicians; I may fall into that folly; I can not answer for my future firmness; but at that time, if some one asks me how I am, I shall say to him, like Pericles, "You can judge by this," shewing him in my hand ten grammes of opium; that will be a very manifest sign of a very violent sickness. My judgement will be strangely unhinged; if lack of endurance and fright get such advantage over me, a very acute fever of my mind may be inferred.

I have taken the trouble to plead this cause, which I understand none too well, in order to give a little support and confirmation to the innate aversion to the drugs and methods of our physic which I have derived from my progenitors, to the end that it may not be simply a stupid and inconsiderate prejudice, and that it may have a little more solidity; and also that they who find me so firm against the exhortations and threats that are addressed to me when my sicknesses weigh upon me may not think that it is mere obstinacy—or if there shall be any one so foolish as to judge that there is some spurring from fame in it. What a well-aimed desire it would be, to seek to derive honour from a theme which is common to me with my gardener and my mule-driver! Certainly my heart is not so inflated with wind that I would exchange a solid, material, and marrowy pleasure like good health for an imaginary, spiritual, and unsubstantial pleasure. Fame, even that of the four sons of Aymon,[2] is too dearly bought for a man of my humour, if it costs him three good attacks of colic. Give me health,

[1] See Plutarch, *Life of Pericles*.

[2] A *chanson de geste* of the twelfth century (printed at the end of the fifteenth), entitled *Les quatre fils d'Aymon*, narrated the adventures of the sons of a prince of Ardennes, who were knighted by Charlemagne. The brothers constantly appear in old French and Italian romances and poems, together with their famous horse, Bayard.

in God's name! They who like our system of physic may have their good and great and strong reasons also; I feel no ill-will toward opinions contrary to mine. I am so far from being perturbed by seeing the disagreement of my judgement with those of other men, and from becoming incapable of fellowship with men because they are of other minds and parties than mine, that, on the contrary, as the most general mode that nature has followed is variety, — (*c*) and more in men's minds than in their bodies, inasmuch as they are of a substance more supple and susceptible of variety of form, — (*a*) I find it much more unusual to see our humours and our purposes in agreement. And there were never in the world two opinions alike, any more than two hairs or two seeds.[1] Their most universal quality is diversity.

[1] See Cicero, *Academica*, II, 26.

THE THIRD BOOK

CHAPTER I

OF THE USEFUL AND THE HONOURABLE

We enter now the Third Book, written during the years between the forty-seventh and fifty-seventh of Montaigne's life, and we pass, one may say in general, from the Montaigne who *in doctorum virginum sinu recessit* — the inscription of 1571 in his tower — to the Montaigne who, sure of acceptance and appreciation, finds pleasure in representing himself to his friends in a manner to recall himself to their memories, as he says, *au naturel*. In his preface to his first publication he speaks as if this had been his purpose from the beginning; but I think this preface was written at the moment of publication, and that then, this intention being fully formed in his mind, he forgot how little some of the Essays in the first two books conform to it. The first two books are indeed *essays;* the thirteen long chapters of the last book are *memoirs*, autobiographical memoirs, of the man, not of the accidents of his life. "I" and "me," "my" and "mine" are, rightly, to be found in every line; and those persons who talk of Montaigne's "egotism" are incapable of understanding the charm of his writings, and still less their permanent value. He was interesting to himself not as a personality but as a man among men. If he says (in the Essay, "Of Repentance") that he wishes to present himself as Michel de Montaigne, it is because that name signifies his *estre universel*, and implies no qualities of an external character. He found himself interesting because he recognised that the study of the individual, the dissection of "a specimen," is the only way to learn the laws of life; that to know oneself is the source of the highest wisdom. He had the scientific sense, also, to perceive that, in dissecting the whole being, nothing is unimportant; mental weaknesses mean as much as intellectual abilities; bodily capacities and physical tastes must all be noted, and the circumstances of the being, the *milieu* by which it is influenced, must not be neglected.

Thus it is that what are called Montaigne's "trivialities" justify themselves. They show Montaigne to have been too much of a philosopher to pretend that he was one every moment.

How far, too, they are justified by a simply human emotion — but not the emotion of egotism — is a question each reader must answer after his own heart. For my part, while Montaigne's vigorous and accurate delineation of human nature from observation of himself seems to me the most remarkable part of his production, the vivifying force of his affections renders the details of his self-portraiture infinitely touching to me. If he paints for his friends, — his personal look, his personal tastes, — it is in part because of his tender longing to be remembered, to be loved, after death; to be remembered and loved as he remembered and

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loved La Boëtie. Montaigne will never be justly estimated till his enthusiastic, one may even say his passionate, power of attachment, and his lifelong feeling of loneliness, are recognised as amongst his most marked traits.

Not only are the Essays of this Third Book, of later date, in general much longer than the earlier ones, but most of them contain still more conscious and intimate revelations of the writer's *moi*. In some of them he enables us to follow him in his usual occupations, to see the domestic annoyances of his private life, to recognise the character of his public life in the midst of the civil troubles of the day, to witness his differences with his neighbours, to accompany him on his travels; the pages impregnate us with his impressions, his reflections, his personal bearing, and we arrive at a delightful familiarity with him.

The style of these later writings also partakes of the increased *largeness;* it has greater freedom in its flow. Of no writer is it more true than of Montaigne that the reader who gives time and thought to his pages, who becomes familiar with them, is rewarded by finding in them a far deeper wisdom than is perceived at first glance. The charm of style becomes subordinate to the charm of character; the book is endowed, as it were, with the personality of a friend, full of good counsel, at once serious and humorous.

And a hundred questions arise, both entertaining and instructive, before the eyes of a student of the Essays; some of them regarding human nature, in considering Montaigne's personal qualities; some of them regarding the modes of human expression, in considering his special method of presenting his thought.

Almost the most interesting of these questions are those that resolve themselves into a consideration of Montaigne's individual manner; of the meaning, not merely of his words, but of the way in which he develops his thoughts. That this has been greatly misunderstood is, perhaps, not surprising, since the study of other authors affords little aid in the study of Montaigne. Shakespeare, for example, was preceded and followed by kindred spirits; in a certain sense he belongs to a group, however much he towers above them. No spirit kindred to that of Montaigne is known in literature.

In studying some of Montaigne's Essays, questions about his manner present themselves which are unanswerable, which could have been answered only by himself — and perhaps not even by him. The reader may amuse himself with forming what hypotheses he pleases.

This first chapter is not a particularly interesting one except *for its personalities;* and even these are more interesting biographically than didactically. For the "useful" and "honourable" of which the Essay treats are the usefulness that may be thought — erroneously — to belong to perfidy and treason, and the honourableness that forbids them. And perfidy and treason — does our age know what they are? Our age, perhaps, but not ourselves. And one reads this chapter with the same sense of remoteness with which one reads Macchiavelli's *Il Principe*, to

which this seems, in fact, almost an intentional counterblast. But we must not forget that under such kings as Charles IX and Henri III the highest nobles thought it no shame to be traitors, or to make use of assassination; and that it is a splendid moral innovation when Montaigne suggests with bitter irony that, if the public good requires treachery and lying, and massacres, these actions should be committed to the hands of citizens forced to sacrifice their honour and their conscience, as in other times they would sacrifice their lives, to save their country.

Montaigne's belief is that treason can never be excusable except when it is employed to "*trahir la trahison.*"

About a fifth of this Essay was added in 1595: one long passage of two or three pages, beginning with "Timoleon," and many shorter ones; and all the nine *prose* Latin quotations and one of the five in verse.

[Inasmuch as this third book was first published in 1588, the letter (*a*), indicating the text of the edition of 1580, no longer appears in the translation. — G. B. I.]

NO one is exempt from saying foolish things; the misfortune is to say them intentionally.[1]

Næ iste magno conatu magnas nugas dixerit.[2]

That does not touch me; mine fall from me as carelessly as they deserve, which is well for them; I part with them at once, for whatever they may bring, and I neither buy them nor sell them but for what they weigh; I speak to this paper as I speak to the first man I meet. That this is true, here is the proof. To whom should not treachery be detestable since Tiberius spurned it at so great a cost? Word was sent to him from Germany that, if he thought well of it, they would rid him of Arminius by poison (he was the most powerful enemy that the Romans had, who had behaved toward them so villainously by defeating Varus, and who alone impeded the extension of his sway in those lands). He[3] replied that the Roman people was accustomed to take vengeance on its foes overtly, arms in hand, and not by deceit and secretly; he set aside the useful for the honourable.[4] He was, you will say, an arrant knave.[5] I think so; that is no great wonder in men of his position.[6] But the acknowledge-

[1] *Curieusement.*

[2] Assuredly this man, with a great effort, will utter great trifles. — Terence, *Heautontimoroumenos*, III, 5.8.

[3] Tiberius.

[4] See Tacitus, *Annals*, II, 88.

[5] *Un affronteur.*

[6] *Profession.*

ment of virtue is not diminished in weight by the mouth of him who hates it, inasmuch as truth extorts it from him by force; and, even if he chooses not to welcome it inwardly, he at least clothes himself with it as an adornment.

The edifice of our life, both public and private, is full of imperfection; but there is nothing useless in nature, not even uselessness itself; nothing has found its way into this universe which does not occupy therein a fitting place. Our being is held together by disordered qualities: ambition, jealousy, envy, vindictiveness, superstition, despair abide in us with such natural proprietorship that their likeness is recognisable in the beasts as well; aye, and in us there is cruelty, that unnatural vice; for in the midst of compassion we are inwardly conscious of I know not what bitter-sweet prick of malicious pleasure in seeing others suffer; and children feel this.

> Suave, mari magno, turbantibus æquora ventis,
> E terra magnum alterius spectare laborem.[1]

Were the seeds of these qualities in man removed, the fundamental conditions of our life would be destroyed. In like manner, in every form of government there are necessary offices which are not only base, but even vicious; the vices here find their place and are employed as connecting links of our union,[2] as poisons are in the conservation of our health. If they become excusable, inasmuch as we have need of them, and general necessity wipes out their true character, this game must be left to be played by the most hardy and least timid citizens, who sacrifice their honour and their conscience as the ancients sacrificed their lives, for the salvation of their country. We who are weaker assume less difficult and dangerous parts. The public good demands that some men betray and lie and kill; let us resign this commission to the more obedient and compliant. Truly, I have often been wroth to see judges induce the criminal, by deceit and false hopes of favour or pardon, to disclose his crime, and employ trickery and shamelessness therein. It would be

[1] It is sweet, when the winds trouble the great sea, to behold from land the deep distress of another. — Lucretius, II, 1.

[2] *A la couſture de noſtre liaiſon.*

well for justice, — and for Plato, too, who approves this habit, — to find other methods more in accordance with my way of thinking. It is a treacherous justice, and I think it is not less wounded by itself than by others. I gave answer not long ago that I, who should be very sorry to deal treacherously with a private person for the sake of the prince, would hardly deal treacherously with a prince for the sake of a private person; and I not only hate to deceive, but I hate also that any one should deceive himself about me; I am not willing even to furnish matter and opportunity for dispute.

In the small part that I have had in negotiating between our princes,[1] in these divisions and subdivisions that tear us asunder to-day, I have sedulously looked to it that they should not be mistaken in me and not be deceived by my rôle.[2] Those who ply that trade [3] keep their thoughts hidden as much as they can, and present themselves with a pretence of being as unbiassed and as acquiescent as possible. As for me, I show forth my most personal opinions and in my most characteristic manner; a sensitive and skilled negotiator, who prefer rather to fail in the business than to be false to myself. Nevertheless, up to this hour, I have had such fortune (for luck certainly has had the chief part in it), that few men have passed between party and party with less distrust, with more favour and familiarity. I have an open manner, which easily makes its way and wins confidence at first acquaintance. Simplicity and pure truthfulness, in what age so ever, always find their opportuneness, and pass current.[4] Moreover, freedom of speech is little suspected and little disliked in those who labour without any interest of their own, and who can truthfully make use of the reply of Hyperides to the Athenians, when they complained of the harshness of his speech: "My masters, do not consider

[1] The reference may be to the negotiations between the duc de Guise and the King of Navarre with which Montaigne was entrusted when Henri was at the French court, about 1572; or to the later negotiations, in 1584 or 1585, when hostilities between the League and the Protestant party were renewed after the rupture of the peace of Fleix. — M. Villey.

[2] *Et s'enferrassent en mon masque.*

[3] Of negotiators.

[4] *Leur opportunité et leur mise.*

whether I am free of speech, but whether I am so without thereby gaining any thing or improving my condition." [1] My freedom has also relieved me easily from the suspicion of hypocrisy by its vigour (never refraining from saying any thing, however weighty and stinging it might be; I could not have said worse in absence), and because it has a manifest appearance of simplicity and recklessness. I aim at no other game in acting than to act, and I connect with that no long consequences and propositions: each act plays its own special game; let it succeed if it can.

Furthermore, I am not impelled by emotions, either of hate or of love, toward the great; nor is my will pinioned by private injury or obligation. (*c*) I regard our kings with an affection due simply by law, and from a subject,[2] neither induced nor repelled by any private interest; for which I thank myself. (*b*) The general and just cause attaches me to it only temperately, and without excitement; I am not subjected to its far-reaching and social pledges and engagements; anger and hatred are beyond the duty of justice, and are passions of service to those only who are not sufficiently held to their duty by simple reason. (*c*) *Utatur motu animi qui uti ratione non potest.*[3] (*b*) All legitimate and equitable intentions are in themselves equable and temperate; otherwise they become seditious and unlawful. It is this that makes me walk everywhere with head erect and an open face and heart. In truth, and I am not afraid to confess it, I would readily, at need, offer a candle to St. Michael and another to his dragon, according to the old woman's idea; I will follow the best side to the point of danger, but no further if I can help it.[4] Let Montaigne be swallowed up in the public ruin if it be necessary; but if it be not necessary, I shall thank fortune if he escapes; and all means that my duty allows me [5] I shall employ for his preservation. Was it not Atticus who, while holding to the right side, and to the

[1] See Plutarch, *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend.*

[2] *Simplement legitime et civile.*

[3] The passions are made use of by him who can not make use of his reason. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, IV, 25. This quotation is found in 1595, but not in the *Édition Municipale.*

[4] *Jusques au feu, mais exclusivement si je puis.*

[5] *Autant que mon devoir me donne de corde.*

side that lost, escaped by his moderation in that universal shipwreck of the world, amidst so many mutations and diversities?[1] For private men, like him, it is an easier matter; and it seems to me that into this sort of business one may rightly not be ambitious to thrust and invite himself. To maintain a wavering attitude, half this and half that,[2] to keep one's feelings unstirred and without preference amidst the troubles of one's country and public divisions, this seems to me neither seemly nor honourable. (*c*) *Ea non media, sed nulla via est, velut eventum expectantium quo fortunæ consilia sua applicent.*[3]

This may be permitted in relation to the affairs of neighbours; and Gelo, tyrant of Syracuse, held his inclination thus in suspense, in the war of the Barbarians against the Greeks, keeping an embassy at Delphi, with offerings, to be on the watch to see on which side fortune would light, and seize the opportunity on the instant to make friends with the victors.[4] It would be a sort of treason so to do in our own affairs, wherein one must necessarily take sides. (*b*) But I find it more excusable not to employ oneself in the work (and yet I do not make use myself of this excuse) for a man who has neither an office nor an express command to urge him to it, than in foreign wars, in which, however, by our laws, no one takes part who does not choose. At the same time, those who wholly enter into them can do it in such a way and with such temperance that the storm will pass over their heads without injury. Had we not reason to hope this in the case of the late bishop of Orleans, lord of Morvilliers?[5] And I know some, among those who at this hour are thus

[1] See Cornelius Nepos, *Life of Atticus*, VI.

[2] *De se tenir chancelant et mestis.*

[3] That is not a middle course; it is no course at all; it is awaiting the event, to adapt their plans to fortune. — Livy, XXXII, 21. The original reads: *Ea non media, sed nulla via est; etenim præterquam quod aut accipienda, aut aspernanda vobis Romana societas est; quid aliud quam nusquam gratia stabili, velut qui eventum expectaverimus, ut fortunæ applicaremus nostra consilia?*

[4] See Herodotus, VII, 163.

[5] Jean de Morvilliers (1506–1577), Keeper of the Seals in 1568, took part in negotiating the treaty of Cateau-Cambresis, and in the Council of Trent. For a Catholic, he seems to have shown much moderation toward the Protestants. — M. Villey.

valiantly working, whose characters are so equable or so mild that they will be left standing, whatever disastrous change and downfall heaven may be preparing for us. I hold that it properly belongs to kings to be roused against kings; and I deride those minds which, from light-heartedness, offer to take part in such disproportioned quarrels; for it is not from a private quarrel with a prince that we proceed against him openly and bravely for our honour and according to our duty; if he [1] does not love such a man, he does better — he esteems him. And notably the cause of the laws and of the defence of the ancient state has always this privilege, that even those who, for their private purposes, oppose this cause forgive its defenders, even if they do not honour them.

But we must not call by the name of duty, as we every day do, a rancorous bitterness and harshness which is born of self-interest and personal affection, nor call treacherous and malicious conduct courage. They give the name of zeal to their propensity toward malignity and violence; it is not the cause that incites them, it is their own interest. They kindle war, not because it is just, but because it is war. Nothing hinders you from bearing yourself fittingly and loyally between men who are enemies; conduct yourself therein with a good-will which, if not quite the same for both (for it may be of different degrees), is at least well governed, and which does not so pledge you to either that he can demand every thing from you; and content yourself with a moderate measure of their favour, and swim in rough water without trying to fish therein.

The other way, that of offering oneself with all one's strength to both one and the other man, has even less prudence than conscience. He to whom you betray the other, by whom you were equally well received — does not he know that with him you will do the like in his turn? He considers you a bad man; nevertheless, he listens to you, and draws information from you, and profits by your disloyalty, for double-dealing men are useful for what they bring, but care must be taken that they carry away as little as possible. I say nothing to one [2] that I can not say to the other when

[1] The prince. [2] Of the two enemies.

the time comes, only with a slight change of tone; and I report only matters that are unimportant or already known, or that are of service to both alike. Not for any advantage do I permit myself to lie to them. What has been entrusted to my silence I religiously conceal, but I pledge myself to secrecy as little as possible; the secret of princes is a troublesome care for him who has no concern with it. I freely offer this bargain, that they confide little to me, but that they trust boldly in what I bring them. I have always known more from them than I have desired to know. (*c*) Frankness of speech opens the way to the like in another and draws it forth, as wine does,[1] and love.

(*b*) Philippides replied wisely, in my opinion, to King Lysimachus, who asked him: "What would you have me bestow on you of my goods?" — "Whatever you choose, provided it is not your secrets." [2] I see that most men take offence if the basis of the affairs in which they are employed is concealed from them, and if there is withheld from their knowledge some purpose in the background. For my own part, I am content that nothing more should be told me than what it is wished I should make use of, and I do not desire that my knowledge shall exceed and influence my speech. If I must serve as an instrument of deceit, let it at least be with a clear conscience. I do not desire to be considered either so affectionate or so loyal a servant as to be thought capable of treachery. He who is faithless to himself is excusable in being so to his master.

But there are princes who do not accept the half of a man, and who scorn limited and conditional services. There is no remedy; I tell them frankly how far I can go; for a slave I must not be, save to reason, and consequently I can not well succeed here. (*c*) And they also are at fault, to exact from a free man a like subjection and obligation to their service as from him whom they have made and bought, or whose fortunes are peculiarly and expressly attached to theirs. (*b*) The laws have saved me much trouble: they have chosen a party for me and have given me a master; every other

[1] Cf. Book II, chap. 2 (Vol. II, pp. 52ff.), where Montaigne dwells at length on this effect of drunkenness.

[2] See Plutarch, *Of Curiosity*.

authority [1] and obligation must be relative to that and restricted by it. Yet this is not to say that, if my feelings should lead me in another direction, I should still give aid here; our will and our wishes make a law for themselves; our actions have to accept the law of public decree.

All this procedure of mine is somewhat in disaccord with our habits; it would not be adapted to produce great results, or permanent ones; innocence itself could not to-day negotiate without dissimulation, or bargain without lying. And so public employments are not game for my hunting; so much of them as my profession demands I supply it with, in as private a manner as I can. As a youth I was immersed in them to my ears, and successfully; but I freed myself from them early in life. I have since often avoided taking part in them, have rarely consented, never sought, to do so; keeping my back turned to ambition, but, if not like the rowers who thus progress backward, still in such wise that I am less indebted to my resolution than to my good-fortune for not having embarked in them; for there are ways less opposed to my taste, and more suited to my capacity,[2] by which if she [3] had formerly summoned me to public service and to advancement in the world's favour, I know that I should have trampled down the reasoning of my judgement, to follow her. They who say usually, in opposition to what I profess, that what I call frankness, simplicity, and ingenuousness in my manners is art and subtlety, and rather prudence than goodness, rather artifice than nature, rather good sense than good-fortune, do me more honour than they take from me. But they certainly make my subtlety too subtle; and whoever has followed me and watched me closely will grant that he has the better of me if he does not confess that there is no rule in their school which could bring about this natural course and maintain an appearance of liberty and freedom so uniform and inflexible amidst paths so winding and diverse; and that all their application and wit [4] could not lead them to it. The way of truth is one and simple; that of private profit and of advantage to the affairs one has in charge is double, unequal, and fortuitous.

[1] *Superiorité.*
[2] Than those he trod in his youth.
[3] That is, his fortune.
[4] *Engin.*

I have often seen these counterfeit and artificial freedoms made use of, but oftenest without success. They have usually the air of Æsop's ass, who, in emulation of the dog, playfully threw his paws on his master's shoulders; but whilst the dog received caresses for such a greeting, the poor ass received twice as many blows.[1] (*c*) *Id maxime quemque decet quod est cujusque suum maxime.*[2] (*b*) I do not wish to deprive deception of its due; that would be to understand the world ill; I know that it has often been used with profit and that it maintains and supports most of the vocations of mankind. There are lawful vices, as many acts that are good or excusable are unlawful.

Justice in itself, natural and universal, is otherwise ordered, and more nobly, than this special, national justice, constrained by the needs of our forms of government. (*c*) *Veri juris germanæque justitiæ solidam et expressam effigiem nullam tenemus; umbra et imaginibus utimur;*[3] (*b*) so that the sage Dandamys, hearing the lives of Socrates, Pythagoras, and Diogenes narrated, judged them to be great men in all else, but too much subjected to reverence for the laws;[4] since true virtue, to give authority and aid to these, must relinquish much of its native vigour; and not only by their permission, but by their persuasion, do many vicious actions take place. (*c*) *Ex senatusconsultis plebisque scitis scelera exercentur.*[5] (*b*) I follow the common way of speaking, which makes a distinction between what is useful and what is honourable; so that it calls some natural actions, which are not only useful but necessary, dishonourable and foul.

But let us pursue our subject of treachery. Two pretenders to the kingdom of Thrace had quarrelled about their rights. The emperor[6] prevented them from fighting; but

[1] See Æsop, *Fable* 293; imitated by La Fontaine, IV, 5.

[2] That especially becomes each man, which is especially his own. — Cicero, *De Off.*, I, 31.

[3] Of true law and genuine justice we have no fixed and complete model; we make use of shadows and images. — *Ibid.*, III, 17.

[4] See Plutarch, *Life of Alexander.*

[5] Crimes are authorized by the senatus consultus and plebiscites. — Seneca, *Epistle* 95. The original text has *sæva* for *scelera.*

[6] Tiberius.

one of them, under colour of bringing about an amicable agreement by an interview, having made an appointment with his competitor to feast at his house, imprisoned and killed him. Justice demanded that the Romans should take account of this crime; there was a difficulty that impeded the ordinary ways: what they could not do lawfully without war and without risk, they undertook to do by treachery; what they could not honourably do, they did profitably. For which task one Pomponius Flaccus was thought fitted; he, by hypocritical words and assurances, having enticed this man into his net, instead of the honour and favour which he promised him, sent him, bound hand and foot, to Rome.[1] One traitor thus betrayed another, contrary to common custom; for they are full of suspicion, and it is hard to surprise them at their own game; witness the burdensome experience that we have just had of this.

Let whoever desires be Pomponius Flaccus — and there are enough who desire it; for my part, both my words and my faith are, like all the rest of me, parts of this common body; their best manifestation [2] is the public service; I hold this as presupposed. But as, in the same way as if I were commanded to take charge of the parliament house and the law courts,[3] I should reply: "I understand nothing of this business"; [4] or to take charge as conductor of pioneers, I should say: "I am assigned to a more worthy function"; in like manner, if it were desired to employ me to lie, to betray, and to perjure myself for some important end, not to assassinate or to poison, I should say: "If I have robbed or cheated any one, send me rather to the galleys." For it is permissible for a man of honour to speak as the Lacedæmonians did — when defeated by Antipater — on coming to an agreement: "You can demand of us burdensome and harmful offices as much as you please; but shameful and dishonourable ones, those you will waste your time in demanding of us." [5] Every man should have sworn to himself what

[1] See Tacitus, *Annals*, II, 64–67. The pretenders were Rhescuporis and Cotys, brother and son of the king of Thrace.

[2] *Leur meilleur effect.* [3] *Du Palais et des plaids.*

[4] That is, of keeping the records.

[5] See Plutarch, *How to distinguish a flatterer from a friend.*

the kings of Egypt made their judges solemnly swear: that they would not stray from their conscience for any command they themselves [1] might give them. In such commissions [2] there is an evident note of ignominy and condemnation; and he who so directs you accuses you, and gives you, if you rightly understand him, a burden and a punishment; in proportion as public matters are improved by your performance, your own are impaired; you are the worse in proportion as you do the better. And it will be no strange thing, nor perchance without some appearance of justice, that the same man ruins you who employs you. (*c*) If treachery can be excusable in any case, it is so only when it is employed to chastise and betray treachery. (*b*) There are many instances of perfidy, not only rejected, but punished, by those in whose behalf they were undertaken. Who does not know the judgement of Fabricius in the matter of the physician of Pyrrhus? [3] And this also is found, that a thing has been commanded, and afterward he who commanded it has severely avenged it upon him whom he had employed to do it, denying the possession of such unbridled power, and disowning a servitude and obedience so prostituted and so base.

Jaropelc, Duke of Russia, tampered with a Hungarian gentleman to betray Boleslaus, King of Poland, by contriving his death, or by giving the Russians an opportunity to do him some notable injury. He [4] bore himself in this business like a wily man: he devoted himself more than before to the service of that king, and succeeded in becoming one of his trusted counsellors. With these advantages, and choosing in good season the opportunity of his master's absence, he betrayed to the Russians Vislicia, a large and rich city, which was completely sacked and burned by them, with slaughter, not only of all the inhabitants of the city, of every age and sex, but of a large number of the nobility of

[1] That is, the kings. See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.

[2] That is, to lie, to betray, etc.

[3] The well-known story is that the physician of Pyrrhus offered to Fabricius to poison his master; Fabricius informed Pyrrhus of his treachery, and sent the man back in chains. See Cicero, *De Off.*, III, 22; Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.

[4] The Hungarian.

the neighbourhood whom he had assembled there to that end. Jaropelc, his vengeance and his wrath being assuaged (which were not, indeed, without cause, for Boleslaus had greatly wronged him, and by similar conduct), and being sated with the result of this treachery, coming to consider its ugliness, naked and by itself, and to regard it with a sane vision no longer disturbed by passion, was seized with such remorse and loathing that he had the eyes put out and the tongue and privy parts cut off, of him who had done this.[1]

Antigonus persuaded the Argyraspides soldiers to betray to him Eumenes, their captain-general, his adversary; but, whereas he had him put to death after they had delivered him into his hands, he desired to be himself the agent of divine justice in punishment of so detestable a crime, and he delivered them [2] into the hands of the governor of the province, with express command to destroy them and, in whatever manner, to give them a disgraceful death. And consequently, of the great number of them not one ever afterward saw the soil of Macedonia.[3] The better he had been served by them, the more wickedly and more deserving of punishment he judged their action to have been.

(*c*) The slave who betrayed the hiding-place of Publius Sulpicius, his master, was given his liberty in accordance with the promise of Sylla's decree of proscription; but, in accordance with the promise of public justice, being free, he was thrown headlong from the Tarpeian rock.[4] They [5] hang such traitors with the purse of the payment due them round their necks; thus satisfying their own loyalty to their word in its secondary and special sense, they also satisfy it in its general and primal significance.[6]

[1] See H. Fulstin, *Histoire des roys de Pologne* (French translation by Baudouin, 1573), book III.

[2] That is, the soldiers.

[3] See Plutarch, *Life of Eumenes*.

[4] See Florus, *Epitome* of Livy, XXVII.

[5] That is, those who are served by such methods.

[6] *Ils les font pendre avec la bourse de leur païement au col. Aiant satisfaict à leur seconde foi et speciale, ils satisfont à la generale et premiere.* In the edition of 1595, the next sentence, with the anecdote of King Clovis, is placed *before* this general remark. The order of the *Édition Municipale* is followed here.

Mahomet the Second, wishing to rid himself of his brother, from a desire of unquestioned authority according to the custom of their race, employed about this one of his officers, who suffocated him,[1] choking him with a quantity of water poured into him all at once. This done, for expiation of this murder, he[2] delivered the murderer into the hands of the dead man's mother (for they were brothers only on the father's side); she, in his presence, opened the murderer's stomach, and eagerly, with her own hands, searching for and tearing out his heart, threw it to the dogs to eat.[3] And our King Clovis, instead of the golden armour that he had promised them, had the three servants of Cannacre hanged after they had betrayed their master to him; in which matter he had made use of them.[4]

(*b*) And even to them who are of little worth, it is very agreeable, having derived profit from some wicked act, to be able afterward to attach securely to it some stroke of kindness and justice, as by way of compensation and conscientious correction. (*c*) Added to this, they regard the agents of such horrible deeds as persons by whom they are branded;[5] and they seek, by the death of these persons, to stifle the knowledge and evidence of such practices. (*b*) And if, by chance, you are rewarded for what you have done, in order that public necessity may not lack that extreme and desperate remedy, he who does this fails not to consider you as an accursed and execrable man, if he be not himself such a one; and he considers you more treacherous than does he to whom you have been a traitor; for he is shewn the wickedness of your heart by the deed of your hands, performed without self-condemnation and without personal object.[6] But he employs you in this business just as outcasts[7] are employed for executing sentences — an office not less useful than it is dishonourable. Besides the baseness of such com-

[1] The brother. [2] Mahomet.

[3] See Lavardin, *Histoire de Scanderberg;* and cf. Chalcondylas, VII, 11.

[4] See du Haillant, *Histoire des roys de France.*

[5] *Qui les leur reprochent.*

[6] *Car il touche la malignité de vostre courage par vos mains, sans desadveu, sans object.*

[7] *Les hommes perdus.*

missions, there is a prostitution of conscience. Sejanus's daughter, who could not be put to death according to a certain form of sentence at Rome because she was a virgin, was ravished by the executioner before he strangled her, that the law might have its course;[1] not his hand alone, but his soul, is the slave of public utility.

(*c*) When the first Amurath, to aggravate the punishment of those of his subjects who had given support to the parricidal rebellion of his son, ordered that their nearest kindred should assist in their execution, I consider it highly honourable in some of them to have chosen rather to be unjustly held guilty of another's parricide than to obey the law by becoming parricides themselves.[2] And when, in some paltry forts taken in these days, I have seen rascals, to save their lives, consent to hang their friends and comrades, I have regarded them as of a lower nature than those who were hanged. It is said that Vuitolde, Prince of the Lithuanians, introduced into that nation the custom that a criminal condemned to death should kill himself with his own hand, thinking it unnatural that a third person, innocent of offence, should be employed in, and burdened with, a homicide.[3] (*b*) A prince, when urgent circumstances and some violent and sudden emergency in the needs of his state cause him to break his word and his faith, or otherwise force him from his usual duty, should attribute this necessity to a stroke of the divine rod; crime it is not, for he has put aside his own sense of what is right for a more universal and potent rightness;[4] but certainly it is ill-fortune. So that, to some one who asked me, "What remedy is there?" I answered, "No remedy; if he were really constrained between those two extremes," — (*c*) (*sed videat ne quæratur latebra perjurio*[5]), — (*b*) "he must needs so do; but if he did it without regret, if it did not pain him to do it, it is a sign that his conscience is in a bad way."

[1] See Tacitus, *Annals*, V, 9.

[2] See Chalcondylas, I, 10.

[3] The source of this illustration has not been found.

[4] *Car il a quitté sa raison à une plus universelle et puissante raison.*

[5] But let him take heed lest he seek a subterfuge for perjury. — Cicero, *De Off.*, III, 29.

(*c*) If some prince should be found with so sensitive a conscience that no cure would seem to him worth so burdensome a remedy, I should not think the less highly of him; he could not be more excusably and beseemingly ruined. Our ability is not unfailing; however it may be,[1] we must often, as our last anchorage, commit the protection of our vessels to the sole guidance of heaven. For what more justifiable necessity does he reserve himself? What is it less possible for him to do than that which he can not do save at the cost of his faith and his honour? things which, peradventure, should be dearer to him than his own safety and the safety of his people. If, with folded arms, he simply calls God to his assistance, may he not hope that it is not in divine bounty to refuse exceptional favours from its hand to a hand unsullied and just?

(*b*) These are dangerous examples, rare and distempered exceptions to our natural rules; we must yield to them, but with great moderation and circumspection; no private advantage is worth our putting this strain upon our conscience; public advantage, yes, when it is both very evident and very important. (*c*) Timoleon was fitly defended from the unnaturalness of his deed by the tears he shed, remembering that it was with a brother's hand that he had killed the tyrant; and it rightly stung his conscience that it had been necessary to purchase the public advantage at such a cost of the integrity of his moral character.[2] The Senate itself, delivered from servitude by his means, dared not positively decide concerning a deed so momentous and of which there were two so weighty and opposing aspects; but the Syracusans having opportunely, at that very time, sent to solicit from the Corinthians their protection and a leader competent to restore their city to its former dignity and to rid Sicily of many petty tyrants who oppressed it, Timoleon was sent to them with this strange caution and declaration: that, according as he should conduct himself well or ill in his office, their own sentence would incline to grace him as liberator of his country, or to disgrace him as the murderer of his

[1] *Ainsi comme ainsi.*

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Timoleon.* Cf. Book I, chap. 38 (Vol. I, p. 313).

brother.[1] This fantastic conclusion has some excuse from the danger of the example and the importance of a deed so out of the ordinary. And they did well to disburden their judgement, or to base it elsewhere and upon other considerations. Now, the conduct of Timoleon on this expedition very soon made his cause more clear, he bore himself therein so worthily and virtuously in every respect; and the good-fortune that attended him with the obstacles he had to overcome in that noble enterprise seemed to be sent him by the gods conspiring in favour of his justification.

This man's purpose was his excuse, if any purpose could be. But the profit of the increase of the public revenues, which served the Roman Senate as a pretext for the foul decision which I am about to relate, is not important enough to warrant such an injustice. Certain cities had bought with money their ransom, and had had their freedom restored at the hands of L. Sylla, by the command and permission of the Senate. The matter having fallen again into judgement, the Senate sentenced them to be taxed as before, and decreed that the money they had used to ransom themselves be forfeited.[2] Civil wars often give birth to such villainous instances, as that we punish private individuals because they believed us when we were other than now; and even a judge makes a man who has no resource suffer the penalty of his opinions; the teacher whips his pupil for his docility, and the guide his blind man: a shocking counterfeit of justice. There are precepts of philosophy both false and weak. The example philosophers set before us, to show that private advantage may prevail over plighted faith, does not acquire enough weight from the circumstances that they attach to it. Robbers have captured you; they have set you at liberty, having made you swear to pay a certain sum. It is wrong to say that a man of worth, when out of their hands, will be released from his word.[3] It is not at all so: what I have once

[1] *Leur arrest prenderoit party à la faveur du liberatur de son pais, ou à la desfaveur du meurtrier de son frere.* See Diodorus Siculus, XVI, 29.

[2] See Cicero, *De Off.*, III, 22.

[3] It is probably Cicero whom Montaigne here criticises: see *De Off.*, I, 10, and III, 29; but the discussion of this fundamental question was everywhere in the air, from the days of Machiavelli and Bodin. The

willed through fear I am bound still to will when without fear; and if fear shall have forced only my tongue and not my will, still I am bound to make good my word. For my own part, when my words have indiscreetly gone beyond my thought, I have none the less scrupled to disregard them. Otherwise, step by step, we shall come to abolishing all the claims that another derives from our promises. *Quasi vero forti viro vis possit adhiberi.*[1] Only in one case has our private interest the right to excuse us for breach of promise — if we have promised something that is wicked and unjust in itself; for the claim of virtue should prevail over the claim of our bond.

(*b*) I have heretofore placed Epaminondas in the first rank of eminent men,[2] and I do not retract. How high he held the perception of his private duty, who never killed a man whom he had overcome; who, to gain the inestimable blessing of giving liberty to his country, had scruples about putting to death a tyrant or his accomplices without the forms of law; and who deemed him bad as a man, however good a citizen he might be, who, in the thick of the enemy and in battle, did not spare his friend and his host. This was a soul of rich composition; he united to the most pitiless and violent human deeds kindness and humanity, the most delicate, indeed, that can be found in the school of philosophy. Was it nature or art that softened to such an extreme degree of gentleness and affability of temper that heart so stout, so bold, and so unyielding to suffering, death, and poverty? Terrible in steel and blood, he shatters and crushes a nation invincible by all others than himself alone, and turns aside, in the midst of such a mellay, on meeting with his host and his friend. Truly war was well ruled by him who forced it to submit to the curb of kind feeling at the point of its greatest intensity, so inflamed as it was, and foaming with rage and slaughter. It is wonderful to be able to connect with

Council of Constance (1414) declared that there was no obligation to keep faith with the enemies of the faith.

[1] As if force could avail against a truly great man. — Cicero, *De Off.*, III, 30.

[2] See Book II, chap. 36 (p. 190 *supra*); Plutarch, *Of the dæmon of Socrates.*

such actions [1] some appearance of justice; but it belongs only to the strength of Epaminondas to combine with them gentleness and ease of manner and the purest innocence. And whereas one man [2] said to the Mamertines that statutes had no force against armed men; another,[3] to a tribune of the people, that the times of justice and of war were not the same; and a third,[4] that the noise of arms prevented him from hearing the voice of the laws — this man [5] was not prevented even from hearing the voice of civilisation [6] and pure courtesy. Did he not borrow from his enemies the custom of sacrificing to the Muses when going forth to war, to soften by their sweetness and gaiety that martial frenzy and fierceness? [7]

Let us not fear, after the example of so great a preceptor, to consider (*c*) that there is something not lawful, even against enemies; [8] (*b*) that public interest ought not to require every thing from all men contrary to private interest, (*c*) *manente memoria, etiam in dissidio publicorum fœderum privati juris;* [9]

(*b*) et nulla potentia vires
Præstandi, ne quid peccet amicus, habet; [10]

and that all things are not permissible to a right-minded man in the service of his king or of the general cause and of the laws; (*c*) *non enim patria præstat omnibus officiis, et ipsi conducit pios habere cives in parentes.*[11] (*b*) This is a lesson suited to this time; we need not armour our hearts: [12] it is

[1] As those of Epaminondas.
[2] Pompeius. See Plutarch, *Life of Pompeius.*
[3] Cæsar. See Idem, *Life of Cæsar.*
[4] Marius. See Idem, *Life of Marius.*
[5] Epaminondas. [6] *La civilité.*
[7] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of the Lacedæmonians.*
[8] Cf. what Seneca says of Fabricius in *Epistle* 120.
[9] Since the memory of private right remains even when public contracts are disputed. — Livy, XXV, 18.
[10] And no power has force enough to defend doing wrong to a friend. — Ovid, *De Ponto,* I, 7.37.
[11] For our duty to the country does not supersede all other duties; and it is of advantage to the country itself that its citizens should be loyal to their parents. — Cicero, *De Off.,* III, 23. Montaigne has changed Cicero's text, which reads: *Non igitur patria præstat omnibus officiis. Immo vero, sed ipsi patriæ conducit pios habere cives in parentes.*
[12] *Nous n'avons que faire de durcir nos courages par ces lames de fer.*

enough that our backs be armoured; it is enough to dip our pens in ink without dipping them in blood. If it be high-heartedness, and the result of a rare and surpassing virtue, to despise friendship, private bonds, one's plighted word, and the ties of kindred, in favour of the common welfare and of obedience to authority, it is enough surely to excuse us from it, that this is a sort of loftiness that can find no lodgement in the high-heartedness of Epaminondas. I abhor the frantic exhortations of this other disordered mind, —

> dum tela micant, non vos pietatis imago
> Ulla, nec adversa conspecti fronte parentes
> Commoveant; vultus gladio turbate verendos.[1]

Let us deprive of this pretext of rightness those who are by nature wicked and blood-thirsty and treacherous; let us turn our backs on this heinous and insane justice, and hold fast to more human copies. How great the effect of time and example! In an encounter during the civil war against Cinna, one of Pompey's soldiers, having unwittingly killed his brother who was of the opposite faction, immediately killed himself from shame and grief; [2] and some years later, in another civil war of this same people, a soldier demanded a reward from his officers for having killed his brother.[3]

We ill argue the honour and beauty of an act by its usefulness; and it is an ill conclusion to think that every one is bound to do it, (*c*) and that it is becoming for every one, if (*b*) it be useful.

(*c*) Omnia non pariter rerum sunt omnibus apta.[4]

(*b*) If we select what is most necessary and most useful in human society, it will be marriage; yet the counsel of holy men finds the contrary course more noble, and excludes therefrom the most honourable vocation of men, as we assign to the stud the animals that are of least worth.

[1] When weapons flash, let no thought of filial piety, let not even the sight of your fathers opposed to you, move you; strike with the sword their venerable heads. — Lucan, VII, 320. Lucan puts the words into the mouth of Cæsar.

[2] See Tacitus, *History*, III, 51. [3] See *Ibid.*

[4] All things are not equally suited to all men. — Propertius, III, 9.7.

CHAPTER II

OF REPENTING

After an exordium of a kind that now becomes more or less habitual with him, expressing his manner of writing and thinking, Montaigne comes quickly to the present point, — that he rarely *repents*, — and then goes on to show why this is so; and, further, what repentance is, or should be. But this can not be done without such discussion of the general nature of man that the thought touches now this point, now that, and any abridgement of the Essay would be foolishness. *Tout abrégé d'un bon livre est un sot abrégé;* and these pages are "good" indeed, and to know what is in them they must be read! They elude delineation like the waves of the sea: each mass of thought rolls serenely forward, gathers force as it advances, rises to its natural height, and, breaking, flows back to swell the volume of the following one.

The sketch of himself which, without writing the name beneath, he gives on one page, has the special interest of the touch about his military life (which I am persuaded was of greater extent than is generally supposed) — *non plus en guerre qu'en paix.*

This Essay was considerably added to and somewhat changed in 1595; all the four *prose* Latin quotations were added, and several longish passages — about a quarter of the whole.

OTHERS shape the man; I narrate him,[1] and offer to view a special one, very ill-made, and whom, could I fashion him over, I should certainly make very different from what he is; but there is no doing that.[2] Now the lines of my portrait do not err, although they change and are now this, now that. The world is but perpetual motion; all things in it move incessantly, — the earth, the rocks of the Caucasus, the pyramids of Egypt, — both with the universal motion and with their own; fixedness itself is only a more lingering motion. I can not anchor my subject: he is always restless, and staggering with an unsteadiness natural to him.[3] I catch him in the state that he is in at the moment when I turn my attention to him. I do not paint his being; I paint his passing — not the passing from one age to another, or, as the common people say, from seven years to seven years, but from day to

[1] *Je le recite.*
[2] *Mes-huy c'est fait.*
[3] *D'une ivresse naturelle.*

day, from moment to moment; my narrative must be in accordance with the hour; I may change immediately, not merely by chance, but also by intention.[1] My narrative is a record of varying and mutable incidents and of uncertain thoughts, and, it may happen, contradictory ones, whether because I am different myself, or because I apprehend the subjects by other circumstances and considerations. So it is that, peradventure, I do indeed contradict myself, but the truth, as Demades said, I in no wise contradict.[2] If my soul could find a foothold, I should not exert myself in attempts, I should free myself from perplexity;[3] it is still in pupilage and on trial.

I set forth a life humble and without glory — it comes to the same thing; all moral philosophy may be connected with a common and private life as fitly as with a life of richer substance; every man has in himself the whole form of human nature. (*c*) Writers of books commune with the world with some special and peculiar badge; I am the first to do this with my general being, as Michel de Montaigne, not as grammarian or poet or jurisconsult. If the world finds the fault that I speak too much of myself, I find the fault that it does not even think of itself.

(*b*) But is it reasonable that, being so private in my way of life, I undertake to make myself publicly known? Is it reasonable also that I produce to the world, where manner and art have so much influence and authority, results of nature both imperfect and simple, and of a nature, besides, of very little force? Is it not like building a wall without stone, or something of that sort, to build books without learning? The compositions of music are guided by art, mine by chance. I have this at least in accord with doctrine, that never did a man treat a subject which he understood or knew better than I do this that I have undertaken, and that therein I am the most learned man alive; secondly, that no one ever (*c*) went deeper into his subject, or by full examination of it more distinctly pointed out its different parts and

[1] With this change to the first person, he identifies himself as his "subject."

[2] See Plutarch, *Life of Demosthenes*.

[3] *Je ne m'essaierois pas, je me resoudrois.*

its issues, and (*b*) arrived more exactly and more completely at the end which he had proposed to himself of his work. To perfect it, I have need to bring to it only fidelity; that I give to it, the most sincere and purest that can be found. I tell the truth, not to my full satisfaction, but as much as I venture to utter; and I venture a little more as I grow old; for it would seem that custom concedes to age more liberty of garrulity and indiscretion in speaking of oneself. It can not here happen, as I often see it happen, that there is contrariety between the artisan and his work; a man of such an excellent course of life, can he have written such a foolish book? or, such learned writings, have they proceeded from a man of such weak conduct? (*c*) If a man be commonplace in intercourse, and his writings remarkable, it means that his ability is somewhere whence he borrows it, and not in himself. A learned person is not learned throughout; but the able man is able throughout, and even in not knowing.

(*b*) My book and I, we here proceed in conformity with one another and in one course. In other cases, the work may be praised or blamed apart from the workman; in this case, not: who touches the one touches the other. He who shall pass judgement on it without becoming acquainted with the workman will wrong himself more than me; he who comes to know him will wholly satisfy me. Fortunate beyond my deserts if I have only this much of public approbation, that I make people of intelligence feel that I could have profited by learning had I had it, and that I deserve more aid from memory.[1]

Let me be excused for saying here what I often say, that I rarely repent, (*c*) and that my conscience is content with itself, not as the conscience of an angel or a horse, but as the conscience of a man; (*b*) adding this unfailing qualification, — not a qualification of convention but of true and essential submission, — that I speak as one who is ignorant and seeking, referring myself for decision purely and simply to common and legitimate opinion. I do not teach, I narrate.

There is no sin that is unquestionably sin which does not do harm, and which a sound judgement does not reprove;

[1] Here begins the subject of the Essay; the preceding pages are only a prologue.

for it has such manifest vileness and unseemliness that, peradventure, they are right who say that it is chiefly begotten by stupidity and ignorance, so difficult is it to conceive that it can be recognised without being hated. (*c*) Wickedness swallows the greater part of its own venom, and poisons itself therewith.[1] (*b*) Vice, like an ulcer in the flesh, leaves repentance in the soul, which is forever scratching and lacerating itself.[2] For reason does away with other sadnesses and pains, but it engenders that of repentance, which is the more grievous inasmuch as it is born within; as the chills and heat of fevers are more severe than those which come from outside. I regard as vices (but each in its degree) not only those which reason and nature condemn, but those also which the opinion of mankind, false and erroneous indeed, has created, if the laws and custom give authority to that opinion. Even so, there is no goodness which does not rejoice a well-dowered nature. There is surely I know not what self-gratification in doing well, which rejoices us ourselves, and a noble pride which attends a good conscience. A boldly vicious character may perhaps obtain for itself security, but it can not supply itself with this complacency and contentment. It is no slight pleasure to feel oneself preserved from the contagion of so rotten an age, and to say within oneself: "Whoever could see me to my very soul would not find me guilty, either of causing the affliction or the ruin of any one, or of revenge or envy, or of public violation of the laws, or of innovation and disturbance, or of being false to my word; and whatever the license of the age may permit and teach to every one, yet have I not laid hands on either the property or the purse of any Frenchman, and have lived solely upon what is mine, not less in time of war than in peace, and have made use of no man's labour without payment." These testimonies of the conscience are gratifying; and this natural enjoyment is very beneficial for us, and the only recompense that never fails us.

To base the reward of virtuous actions on the approbation of others is to choose a too uncertain and obscure founda-

[1] See Seneca, *Epistle* 81.22: *Malitia ipsa maximam partem veneni sui bibit.*

[2] See Plutarch, *Of the tranquillity of the mind.*

tion. (*c*) Especially in a corrupt and ignorant age like this, the good opinion of the vulgar is offensive; to whom do you trust to perceive what is praiseworthy? God preserve me from being a man of worth according to the description which I see given every day by each one doing honour to himself! *Quæ fuerant vitia, mores sunt.*[1] Some of my friends have sometimes undertaken to school me frankly and spiritedly,[2] either of their own motion or at my invitation, as a service which, to a well-formed mind, surpasses, not in utility only, but in kindness as well, all the other services of friendship. I have always welcomed it with the most open arms of courtesy and gratitude. But, to speak of it now in all honesty, I have often found in their reproofs and their praise so much false measure, that I should hardly have done wrong to do wrong,[3] rather than do rightly after their fashion. (*b*) We especially, who live a private life that is in view only to ourselves, ought to have a model established within us, by which to test our actions and, according to it, sometimes make much of ourselves, sometimes correct ourselves. I have my laws and my court to judge me, and I resort to them more than elsewhere. I restrain my actions, indeed, according to others, but I enlarge them only according to myself. It is only you who know whether you are cowardly and cruel or loyal and pious; others do not at all see you, they guess about you by uncertain conjectures; they see not your natural disposition so much as your artificial one. Therefore rely not on their judgement; rely on your own. (*c*) *Tuo tibi judicio est utendum.*[4] *Virtutis et vitiorum grave ipsius conscientiæ pondus est; qua sublata, jacent omnia.*[5] (*b*) But this that is said, that repentance follows close on the heels of sin, seems not to regard sin when, armed from head to foot, it dwells within us[6] as in its own abode. We

[1] What were formerly vices have become habits. — Seneca, *Epistle* 39.6.

[2] *De me chapitrer et mercurialiser à cœur ouvert.*

[3] *Que je n'eusse guere failli, de faillir.*

[4] You must make use of your own judgement about yourself. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 23.

[5] Great is the importance of one's own consciousness of virtues and vices; that discarded, all is laid low. — Idem, *De Nat. Deor.*, III, 35.

[6] *Le peché qui est en son haut appareil, qui loge en nous.*

can disown and forbid the vices which surprise us, and to which passions impel us; but those which by long habit are rooted and anchored in a strong and sturdy will are not submissive to being thwarted. Repentance is no other than a forbidding of our will and opposition to our inclinations, which stirs us up on all sides. It makes this man [1] repudiate his past virtue and continence: —

> Quæ mens est hodie, cur eadem non puero fuit?
> Vel cur his animis incolumes non redeunt genæ? [2]

That is a life of consummate excellence which preserves an orderly bearing even in private. Every one may take part in play-acting, and represent an honourable personage on the stage; but the point is, inwardly and in one's own breast, where all things are permissible, where all things are hidden, there to be subject to rule. The next step is to be so in one's own house, in one's every-day actions, of which we have not to render account to any one; where there is nothing studied, nothing artificial. And therefore Bias, describing a surpassingly worthy family condition, says: "The master is the same, when in his house alone, as when out of it, from fear of the law and of men's speech."[3] And that was a fit saying of Julius Drusus to the workmen who offered for three thousand crowns so to arrange his house that his neighbours could no longer look into it as they had done: "I will give you six thousand," he said, "and do you manage so that every one can look into every part of it." [4] We note as honourable the custom of Agesilaus, of taking up his quarters in temples,[5] when he was travelling, so that the people and the gods themselves could witness his private actions. A man may appear wonderful to the world, in whom his wife and his servant see nothing even remarkable; few men have been admired by their household.[6]

[1] Ligurinus, to whom the following lines are addressed.

[2] Why was not my mind the same when I was a boy that it is to-day? Or why, with my thoughts of to-day, do not my cheeks become as they were? — Horace, *Odes*, IV, 10.7.

[3] See Plutarch, *Banquet of the seven wise men*.

[4] See Idem, *Political Precepts*.

[5] *Les églises*. See Idem, *Life of Agesilaus*.

[6] Cf. Plutarch, *Life of Pericles*.

(*c*) No man was ever a prophet, not merely in his own house, but in his native place, declares the teaching of history. Even so with things of naught; and in the following humble instance may be seen the image of greater ones. In my region of Gascony, it seems droll to people to see me in print. In proportion as knowledge of me extends farther from my abode, I am rated the higher: in Guienne I pay the printers, elsewhere they pay me. Those who hide themselves when alive and here, rely on this fortune to bring themselves into repute when dead and gone. I would rather have less of it; and I fling myself into the world only for what I wrest from it. When I leave it, I quit it all.

(*b*) The crowd escorts him in public state, with admiration, to his door; he puts off, with his gown, the part he plays, and falls as much the lower as he had been uplifted; within, in himself, all is commotion and of no account. Even if discipline existed there, it would need a keen and special judgement to perceive it in these mean and secret acts. Moreover, regularity is a dull and dismal virtue. To enter a breach, to conduct an embassy, to govern a people — these are brilliant actions. To chide, to laugh, to sell, to pay, to love, to hate, and to hold intercourse with one's family and with oneself, gently and justly, not to give way, never to derogate from oneself — that is something more rare, more difficult, and less observable. Retired lives, whatever may be said, maintain in these ways duties as severe and exacting as do other lives, or more so. (*c*) And private persons, says Aristotle, observe a more difficult and higher virtue than they who are in authority.[1] (*b*) We prepare ourselves for great occasions more for the sake of glory than for the sake of conscience. (*c*) The shortest way to attain glory would be to do for conscience what we do for glory. (*b*) And the virtue of Alexander seems to me to exhibit somewhat less strength in its scene of action than does that of Socrates in its humble and obscure exercise. I can easily imagine Socrates in Alexander's place, but Alexander in that of Socrates, I can not. To him who shall ask Alexander what he knows how to do, he will reply: "Subjugate the

[1] See *Nicomachæan Ethics*, X, 7.

world"; he who shall ask this of the other will be answered that he knows how "to lead human life in conformity with its natural condition" — a knowledge much more general in its scope, more important, and more legitimate.

The worth of the soul does not consist in moving at a height, but fittingly. (*c*) Its grandeur is not brought into play in grandeur, but in mediocrity. Thus those who judge and examine us within make no great account of the lustre of our public acts, and see that they are but threads and drops of clear water springing from a source otherwise slimy and thick; even so, those who judge us by this brave outward show equally come to conclusions about our internal character, and can not yoke together faculties that are common and like their own and those other faculties, so far from their scope, which astound them. Thus we ascribe to demons monstrous shapes; and who does not endow Tamburlane with lifted eyebrows, open nostrils, a grim visage, and a stature as huge as the stature of the idea conceived of him from the report of his fame? Had I been taken in former times to see Erasmus, it would have been hard for me not to find adages and apothegms in every thing he might say to his servant or the hostess of his inn. Nous imaginons bien plus sortablement un artisan sur sa garderobe ou sur sa femme qu'un grand president, venerable par son maintien et suffisance. Il nous semble que de ces hauts throsnes ils ne s'abaissent pas jusques à vivre. (*b*) As vicious souls are often incited to do well by some foreign impulsion, so are virtuous souls to do ill. We must therefore judge them by their settled condition, when they are alone with themselves, if sometimes they are so; or, at least, when they are nearest repose and in their true position. Natural inclinations are assisted and strengthened by education; but they are rarely altered and overcome. A thousand characters, in my time, have slipped away toward virtue or toward vice, despite contrary instruction.

> Sic ubi desuetæ silvis in carcere clausæ
> Mansuevere feræ, et vultus posuere minaces,
> Atque hominem didicere pati, si torrida parvus
> Venit in ora cruor, redeunt rabiesque furorque,

Admonitæque tument gustato sanguine fauces;
Fervet, et a trepido vix abstinet ira magistro.[1]

These original qualities are not extirpated: they are covered up, they are hidden. The Latin language is to me as my own;[2] I understand it better than French, but for forty years past I have not used it at all in speaking and scarcely in writing; none the less, in the extreme and sudden emotions into which I have fallen two or three times in my life, — one was when I saw my father, who was in perfect health, fall over upon me in a swoon, — my first ejaculations, from the bottom of my heart, have always been Latin words, (*c*) Nature coming to the surface and expressing herself forcibly in spite of such long habit; (*b*) and this same thing is told of many others.

They who have tried to correct the morals of the world in my time, by new ideas, reform the manifest vices; the essential ones they let alone if they do not increase them; and increase in these is to be feared; we readily linger from all other well-doing on these arbitrary external reforms, of less cost and greater honour, and thus we cheaply provide for the other natural vices, consubstantial and intestinal. Consider a little what our experience warrants: no one, if he listens to himself, does not discover in himself a personal nature,[3] a dominant nature, which is at strife with rules of life [4] and with the storm of passions opposed to it. For my own part, I feel myself hardly aroused by sudden impulses; I am, as it were, always in my place, as unwieldy and heavy bodies are. When I am not entirely myself,[5] I am never far from being so; my wanderings do not carry me very far; there is nothing extreme and strange in them; and, besides, my second thoughts are sound and vigorous. The real condemnation, and that which concerns the common manner of

[1] So when wild beasts become unhabituated to the forest, and tamed by captivity, and, having lost their fierce look and learned to endure control by men, if a little blood touches their hot lips, their madness and fury return, their throat swells, excited by the taste of blood; they burn with anger, and hardly refrain from attacking their frightened master. — Lucan, IV, 237.

[2] For the way in which Montaigne was taught Latin, see Book I, chap. 26 (Vol. I, pp. 231, 232).

[3] *Une forme sienne.* [4] *L'institution.* [5] *Si je ne suis chez moi.*

men of our day, is that their very retirement is full of corruption and filth; their idea of amendment blurred; their repentance diseased, and almost as much at fault as their sin. Some, either because they are fast bound to vice by a natural tie, or from long familiarity, do not perceive its ugliness. To others, in whose ranks I am, vice is a burden; but they counterbalance it with pleasure or other circumstance, and suffer it, and lend themselves to it for a certain reward, albeit viciously and basely. Yet it might be possible, perhaps, to conceive so great a disproportion of degree that the pleasure would justly excuse the sin, as we say of utility; not only if it [1] were accidental and apart from the sin itself, as in theft, but if it existed in the very act of committing the sin, as in intercourse with women, where the provocation is violent, and, they say, sometimes invincible.

The other day, when I was in Armaignac, I saw, on the estate of a kinsman of mine, a peasant whom every one calls "the thief." He told the story of his life thus: being born in poverty, and finding that, gaining his bread by the work of his hands, he would never succeed in sufficiently protecting himself against want, he resolved to become a thief; and by means of his bodily strength, he had safely given his whole youth to that occupation; for he made his harvest and vintage in other men's fields; but it was at a distance, and in such huge bundles that it was inconceivable that any man could carry away so much on his shoulders in one night; and he had taken pains, moreover, to equalise and distribute the loss he caused, so that the burden was less intolerable to each individual. He is now, in his old age, rich for a man of his condition, thanks to this business, of which he makes open confession; and to reconcile God to his gettings, he says that he is daily in the way of giving satisfaction by benefits to the successors of those whom he robbed; and that, if he does not finish the task, — for accomplish it all at once he can not, — he will leave it in charge to his heirs, according to the knowledge that he alone has of the injury he has done to each one. This statement, be it true or false, shows that he regards theft as a shameful act and loathes it, but less than poverty; he repents of it in itself, but, in so far

[1] That is, the pleasure.

as it is thus counterbalanced and compensated, he does not repent of it. This is not that habit which makes us of one body with vice and conforms to it our very understanding; nor is it that impetuous blast which by gusts confuses and blinds our soul and casts us headlong for the time, judgement and all, into the power of vice.

I do ordinarily with my whole being what I do, and all of me is in the action; [1] I have few movements which are hidden and secret from my reason, and which are not guided almost entirely by the concurrence of all my faculties, without division, without intestinal dissension; my judgement has the whole blame or praise for them; and the blame which once it has, it has always; for almost from its birth it is unchanged: the same character, the same course, the same strength. And in the matter of general beliefs, I established myself in my youth at the point where I was to remain.

There are impetuous, hasty, and sudden sins: let us leave them at one side; but in those other sins, so often repeated, meditated, and considered, whether they be sins belonging to the temperament (*c*) or to the profession and vocation, (*b*) I can not conceive that they should be so long rooted in the same heart, unless the reason and the conscience of him who has them constantly so wills and so knows; and the repentance of them that he boasts of as coming to him at a certain appointed moment is somewhat hard for me to imagine and shape. (*c*) I do not follow the school of Pythagoras, which believes that men take on a new soul when they approach the images of the gods to receive their oracles,[2] unless he meant just this — that it must needs be a soul unfamiliar, new, and possessed only for the occasion, since our own shows so little sign of purification and cleanliness suitable for that office. (*b*) They [3] do just contrary to the precepts of the Stoics, which bid us, indeed, to correct the imperfections and vices which we recognise in ourselves, but order us not to disturb the quiet of our souls therewith.[4]

[1] *Je fay coustumierement entier ce que je fay, et marche tout d'une piece.*

[2] See Seneca, *Epistle* 94.

[3] That is, those who boast of repentance, etc.

[4] In 1588: *d'en estre marris et desplaisants.*

They give us to believe that they have great inward grief and remorse for their vices; but of amendment and correction, (*c*) or of discontinuance, (*b*) they show us nothing. Yet it is not a cure if the malady is not got rid of. If repentance were laid in the scale, it would outweigh the sin. I find no quality so easy to counterfeit as godliness, where one's morals and life do not conform to it; its essence is abstruse and hidden; the externals easy and ostentatious.

As for me, I may desire, in general, to be other than I am; I may condemn, and be displeased by, my character as a whole,[1] and beseech God to change me completely, and to excuse my natural weakness; but that, it seems to me, I ought not to call repentance, any more than my discontent in being neither an angel nor Cato. My actions are controlled and fashioned by what I am and by my condition of life. I can do no better; and repentance does not properly concern things that are not in our power, but regret, in truth, does. I can imagine numberless loftier and better-ordered natures than mine; but I do not thereby amend my faculties; just as neither my arm nor my mind can become more vigorous by conceiving another that is so. If to imagine and to desire a conduct nobler than our own caused repentance for our own, we should have to repent of our most innocent doings, inasmuch as we rightly judge that in a more excellent nature they would have been performed with greater perfection and nobility; and we should wish to do the like. When I take counsel with my old age concerning my conduct in my youth, I find that I usually behaved myself fittingly, in my opinion; that is all that my power to withstand the facts [2] can do. I do not flatter myself: under like circumstances I should be always the same man. It is not being smutched; it is rather a general stain that blackens me. I have no knowledge of a superficial, half-way, formal repentance: it must touch me in every part before I call it so, and must wring my heart and afflict it as deeply as God sees me, and as thoroughly.

As for business affairs, many good chances have escaped me for lack of fortunate management; yet my judgement

[1] *Ma forme universelle.*

[2] *Resistance.* The suggested meaning of this word is conjectural.

made an excellent choice according to the matters presented to it; its habit is to take always the easiest and safest course. I find that in my past deliberations I have, in my way, proceeded wisely in respect to the state of the subject that was brought before me; and I should do the same a thousand years hence under like circumstances. I do not regard what its state is now, but what it was when I was considering it. (*c*) The weight of all opinions depends upon the hour; circumstances and matters change and revolve constantly. I have made some foolish and important mistakes in my life, not for lack of good judgement, but for lack of good-fortune. There are, in the matters we deal with, hidden paths, not discoverable, notably in the nature of man; mute conditions that make no show, unknown sometimes even to their possessor, which are produced and aroused by supervening circumstances. If my foresight has been unable to fathom and predict them, I bear it no ill-will therefor; its function is limited to its compass. (*b*) If the event goes against me, and if it approves the determination that I have rejected, there is no remedy; I do not blame myself for this; I blame my fortune, not what I have done; this is not to be called repentance.

Phocion had given the Athenians certain advice which was not followed. The affair, however, having been carried on prosperously, in opposition to his opinion, some one said to him: "Well, Phocion, are you glad that things are going so well?" "Indeed I am glad," he replied, "that this has happened, but I do not repent having advised the other." [1] When my friends come to me for counsel, I give it freely and clearly, without hesitating as almost every one does because, the thing being a matter of chance, it may turn out contrary to my thought, whereby they may have reason to reproach me for my advice; for which I care not. For they will be in the wrong, since it was not for me to refuse them that service.

(*c*) I seldom have ground to blame any one but myself for my errors or mishaps; for, in truth, I rarely avail myself of others' advice, — unless it be by way of courtesy, — save when I have need of information, of learning, or of know-

[1] See Plutarch, *Apothegms of Kings*, etc.

ledge of the facts; but, in matters in which I have to employ only judgement, outside arguments may serve to confirm me, but rarely to dissuade. I listen graciously and beseemingly to all their reasonings; but, so far as I remember, I have never to this hour trusted any but my own. For me, these others are but flitting trifles that buzz about my will.[1] I value little my own opinion, but I value as little those of others. Fortune requites me fittingly: if I do not accept advice, I give it still less. I am seldom asked for it, but I am still more seldom believed; and I know of no undertaking, public or private, which my advice has bettered or hindered. Even they whom fortune has in some sort bound to follow it have allowed themselves more readily to be guided by any other brain than mine. As one who is quite as jealous of the rights of his ease as of the rights of his authority, I prefer it to be so; in putting me aside, they act according to my open profession, which is, to be wholly set forth and comprehended in myself; it is agreeable to me to forgo all interest in the affairs of others, and to be freed from responsibility about them.

(*b*) About all matters that are gone by, in whatsoever fashion, I have little regret; for this reflection prevents vexation, namely, that they must needs so pass; I see them as in the great movement of the universe, and in the chain of the Stoic causes.[2] The mind can not, in desire and imagination, do away with the smallest part without subverting the whole order of things, both the past and the future. Furthermore, I hate that chance repentance which old age brings. Celuy qui disoit anciennement estre obligé aux années dequoy elles l'avoyent deffaict de la volupté,[3] avoit autre opinion que la mienne: je ne sçauray jamais bon gré à l'impuissance de bien qu'elle me face. (*c*) *Nec tam aversa unquam videbitur ab opere suo providentia, ut debilitas inter optima inventa sit.*[4]

[1] *Selon moy, ce ne sont que mouches et atomes qui promeinent ma volonté.*

[2] That is, of the Stoic conception of causes. Cf. Cicero, *De Fato*, IX.

[3] See Plutarch, *That it is not possible to live happily according to the doctrine of Epicurus;* Cicero, *De Senectute*, XIV.

[4] Providence will never be seen so hostile to its own work that weakness will rank among the best things. — Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, V, 12.19.

(*b*) Nos appetits sont rares en la vieillesse; une profonde satieté nous saisit apres; en cela je ne voy rien de conscience; le chagrin et la foiblesse nous impriment une vertu lache et catarreuse. Il ne nous faut pas laisser emporter si entiers aux alterations naturelles, que d'en abastardir nostre jugement. La jeunesse et le plaisir n'ont pas faict autrefois que j'aie mescogneu le visage du vice en la volupté; ny ne faict à cette heure le degoust que les ans m'apportent, que je mescognoisse celuy de la volupté au vice. Ores que je n'y suis plus, j'en juge comme si j'y estoy.

(*c*) Moi, qui la secoue vifvement et attentifvement, treuve que (*b*) ma raison est celle mesme que j'avoy en l'aage plus licencieux, sinon, à l'avanture, d'autant qu'elle s'est affoiblie et empirée en vieillissant; (*c*) et treuve que ce qu'elle refuse de m'enfourner à ce plaisir en consideration de l'interest de ma santé corporelle, elle ne le feroit non plus qu'autre fois pour la santé spirituelle. (*b*) Pour la voir hors de combat, je ne l'estime pas plus valeureuse. Mes tentations sont si cassées et mortifiées qu'elles ne valent pas qu'elle s'y oppose. Tendant seulement les mains audevant, je les conjure. Qu'on luy remette en presence cette ancienne concupiscence, je crains qu'elle auroit moins de force à la soustenir, qu'elle n'avoit autrefois. Je ne luy voy rien juger apart soy, que lors elle ne jugeast; ny aucune nouvelle clarté. Parquoy, s'il y a convalescence, c'est une convalescence maleficiée. (*c*) Miserable sorte de remede, devoir à la maladie sa santé! Ce n'est pas à nostre malheur de faire cet office; c'est au bonheur de nostre jugement.

No one can make me do any thing by insults and grievances, except curse them; that is for those who rouse themselves only under the lash. My judgement pursues its course more freely in prosperity; it is much more distraught and absorbed when digesting ills than pleasures. I am much more clear-sighted in pleasant weather; health admonishes me not only more gaily, but more effectively, than sickness. I progressed as far as I was able toward reformation and discipline when I was in a position to enjoy them. I should be ashamed and despiteful if I should have reason to prefer the wretchedness and ill-fortune of my old age to my happy, healthy, lusty, and vigorous youth; and if men should have

to value me, not by what I have been, but by what I have ceased to be. In my opinion, it is the living happily, not, as Antisthenes said, the dying happily,[1] which makes human felicity. I have not proposed to append, contrary to nature, the tail of a philosopher to the head and body of a graceless man; nor that a base ending should renounce and belie the best, most complete, and longest part of my life. I propose to present and exhibit myself uniformly, in every part. Had I to live again, I should live as I have lived; I neither lament the past, nor fear the future; and if I am not mistaken, it has been with me inwardly about as it has outwardly. One of my chief obligations to my fortune is that the course of my bodily existence has been so conducted that every thing has come in its season. I have seen the leaves and the flowers and the fruit; and now I see the withering — fortunately, since it has come naturally. I bear much more easily the ills that I have, because they have come at their time, and because they make me remember the more pleasantly the long-continued felicity of my past life. In like manner, my wisdom may well be of the same degree in one and the other period; but it was greater in performance, and of better grace, when lusty, joyous, ingenuous, than it is now — broken, peevish, toilsome. I renounce, therefore, these fortuitous and painful reformations.

(*b*) It needs be that God touch our hearts; it needs be that our conscience be reformed by the enforcement of our reason, not by the enfeeblement of our appetites. Bodily pleasure is not in itself either pale or colourless because it is viewed by dull and dim eyes. Temperance should be loved for itself and from respect to God, who has enjoined it and chastity upon us; that which fevers bring us, and which I owe to the good offices of my colic,[2] is neither chastity nor temperance. No man can pride himself upon despising and combatting sensuality, if he has no perception of it; if he knows nothing of it, either its charm, or its power, or its most alluring beauty. I know them all; it is I who can say this; but it seems to me that in old age our souls are subject to more troublesome maladies and weaknesses than in youth. I

[1] See Diogenes Laertius, *Life of Antisthenes*.
[2] Montaigne's name for stone in the bladder.

said this when I was young, when my beardlessness was looked down upon;[1] I say it still at this hour, when my grey hair gives me authority. We call the fastidiousness of our tastes, our disrelish for things at hand, wisdom; but the truth is that we do not so much depart from vices as change them, and, in my opinion, for the worse. Besides a foolish and perishable pride, a tiresome love of talk, fault-finding and unsociable humours and superstition, and an absurd care about wealth when the use of it is lost, I find in old age more envy, injustice, and malignity. It imprints more wrinkles in our mind than on our face; and there are to be seen few souls which, as they grow old, do not become sour and peevish.[2] Man in completeness moves toward his increase and toward his decrease.

(*c*) In considering the wisdom of Socrates and many circumstances of his condemnation, I could venture to believe that he lent himself to it, in some degree, by prevarication, designedly, having so soon — he was seventy yearsof age — to suffer the benumbing of the rich activity of his mind and the bedimming of its wonted clearness. (*b*) What metamorphoses do I daily see old age cause in many of my acquaintances! It is a potent malady and one that comes upon us naturally and imperceptibly; there is need of a great store of study and great precaution, to avoid the imperfections which it burdens us with, or at least to retard their progress. I feel that, in spite of all I can do to diminish its power, it is gaining upon me step by step; I resist as much as I can, but I know not where, at last, it will take me. Whatever may happen, I am glad that it should be known from what height I have fallen.

[1] *Lors on me donnoit de mon menton par le nez.*
[2] *Ne sentent à l'aigre et au moisi.*

CHAPTER III

OF THREE SORTS OF INTERCOURSE

This is one of the Essays that do much to create that affectionate respect for its author which becomes the dominant feeling with the admirers of Montaigne. The great pleasure to be had — the first pleasure in becoming acquainted with him — from the way he says things, soon passes into far deeper pleasure from the things he says, and the affection excited by his personal charm is blended with the respect excited by his wisdom.

There is another element still in this complex emotion, an element springing partly from the affection, partly from the respect — the element of *compassion;* not of pity, pity is not for a good, great man, but of sympathy for what was lacking to his enjoyment of life, the feeling precisely of "compassion." One needs to know Montaigne intimately to have the intelligent appreciation of his circumstances and conditions which justify this note of *tenderness* toward him; but when it has once been struck in the reader's heart, it sounds often and at unexpected moments. When Montaigne exclaims, in the midst of cheerful, sensible conversation with us: "Good God! what a great service wisdom does those whose desires it limits to their power!" and quotes, as full of meaning, Socrates' phrase: *Selon qu'on peult*, we feel that he himself could not what he would. And the page in this Essay about friendship and about "the difficulties and sensitiveness of social intercourse" is touched with a perhaps unconscious sadness.

But the Essay as a whole is amongst those of the most cheerful, the most conscious, the most delightful egotism, or rather — for there must be a new word invented for Montaigne's kind of egotism — the most charming I-ism, — the *ism* of a philosophic and poetic I, which does honour to the listener by speaking of itself.

Montaigne's self-delineations become more frequent now, in these later Essays, than before. He does not "confide in the public" — a foolish phrase for a foolish thing; but he has confidence in the public: he had become assured, by the way in which the first two books of the Essays had been received, that he could trust his readers to take a serious interest in the study that so seriously and nobly interested him — the study of Michel de Montaigne. And henceforth he does not hesitate to represent himself — as he would have been glad to do from the first — "wholly and nakedly"; not an heroic figure, as he himself well knew, but a figure, more than he thought, to be honoured, and the contemplation of whose friendly face makes us more intelligent and more serene.

This special Essay perhaps particularly gives evidence of the largeness of the field of his "intelligence." It can scarcely be questioned that no one else could ever have written of the three so diverse worlds of men, of women, and of books, with the intimacy of knowledge and the fine-

ness of perception and the mastery of expression that Montaigne here manifests. Who but he ever had such sure-footed familiarity with all these three *commerces?*

The first half of this Essay is characteristically "incoherent"; but one of its sentences might be its epigraph: "A soul well-endowed and accustomed to dealing with men becomes of itself agreeable. Art [the art of expression] is nothing else than the examination and record of what such souls bring forth."

A MAN should not rivet himself too tightly to his humours and temperament. Our chief ability is in knowing how to adapt ourselves to various habits. To be bound and compelled by necessity to one sole course is to exist, but not to live. The noblest souls are those which have more variety and suppleness. (*c*) This is an honourable testimony to the elder Cato: *Huic versatile ingenium sic pariter ad omnia fuit, ut natum ad id unum diceres, quodcumque ageret.*[1] (*b*) Had I the power to fashion myself as I would, there is no way of living so good that I should wish to be so fixed in it that I could not depart from it. Life is an unequal, irregular, and multiform motion. It is not to be a friend to oneself, and still less one's own master — it is to be one's slave, to follow oneself constantly and to be so fast held by one's inclinations that one can not wander away from them, that one can not bend them.

I say this now,[2] because I can not easily free myself from the importunity of my soul, since she can not ordinarily amuse herself except where she is busied, nor employ herself otherwise than intently and entirely. However trivial the subject put before her, she easily magnifies it, and stretches it to the point where she has to apply herself to it with all her strength. Her idleness, consequently, is to me a disagreeable condition,[3] and one that injures my health. Most minds require an unfamiliar subject to rouse and exercise them; mine requires such rather to rest itself and pause a while — *vitia otii negotio discutienda sunt;* [4] for its most laborious and

[1] His versatile genius was so equal to all things that, whatever he did, you would have said that he was born to do that one thing. — Livy, XXXIX, 40.

[2] *A cette heure;* that is, at this time of my life.

[3] *Une penible occupation.*

[4] The vice of idleness must be avoided by occupation. — Seneca, *Epistle* 56.

principal study is the study of itself. (*c*) Books are for it one of the employments which draw it away from its study. (*b*) At the first ideas which occur to it, it bestirs itself and gives proof of its vigour in all ways, exercises its control sometimes toward force, sometimes toward regularity and grace; (*c*) it adjusts, moderates, and strengthens itself. (*b*) It has the wherewithal to arouse its faculties by itself; Nature has given to it, as to all, enough material of its own to make use of and sufficient subjects to investigate and to judge. (*c*) Meditation is a puissant and ample form of study to one who knows how to examine himself and set himself about it vigorously; I like better to shape my mind than to furnish it. There is no occupation weaker or stronger, according to the mind one has, than that of conversing with one's thoughts; the greatest men make it their vocation, *quibus vivere est cogitare;*[1] and Nature has favoured it with this privilege, that there is nothing that we are able to do for so long a time, nor any action to which we devote ourselves more commonly and easily. It is the occupation of the gods, says Aristotle, from which spring their beatitude and our own.[2] Reading serves me especially by arousing my reasoning power[3] in different ways, by setting my judgement to work, not my memory. (*b*) In comparison with the essential profit and improvement at which my mind aims, it values little the labour that is employed in burdening and storing the memory with other men's learning.[4] Consequently few conversations which are not vigorous and forcible hold my attention; it is true that charm and beauty of speech give me as much satisfaction and enjoyment as weight and profundity, or even more. And since I nod in every other sort of conversation, and lend it only the surface of my attention, it often happens to me in such pitiful and feeble talk — talk for the sake of talking[5] — to utter in answer fancies and follies unworthy of a child, or else to be obstinately silent, even more unseasonably and discour-

[1] For whom to live is to think. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, V, 38.

[2] See the *Nicomachæan Ethics*, X, 8. Cf. Cicero, *De Fin.*, V, 4.

[3] *Discours.*

[4] This sentence of 1588 is not found in 1595. Cf. Book III, chap. 8: *La plus part des hommes sont riches d'une suffisance estrangere.*

[5] *Propos de contenance.*

teously. I have a way of musing, which withdraws me into myself,[1] and also a stupid and puerile ignorance about many common things; by these two qualities I have brought it about that people can truthfully tell five or six stories of me as foolish as of any man, whoever he be.

Now, to proceed with my discourse, this fastidious disposition makes me squeamish in dealing with men, it causes me to select carefully,[2] and renders me unfit for acting with them. We live and deal with the common people; if intercourse with them annoys us, if we disdain to associate with humble and ordinary souls, — and the humble and ordinary are often as well disciplined as those of the finest fibre,[3] (*c*) (and all wisdom is ignorant which does not adapt itself to the common ignorance),[4] — (*b*) we ought to cease to concern ourselves with our own affairs or with those of others; both public and private affairs are transacted with such people.[5] The least strained and most natural motions of our soul are the most beautiful; the best occupations, the least laborious. Good God! What a great service wisdom does those whose desires it limits to their power! there is no more useful art. "According to one's ability," was the frequent and favourite saying of Socrates,[6] a saying of great weight. We should direct and confine our desires to the easiest and nearest things. Is it not a foolish humour in me to dissent from a thousand people with whom my destiny connects me, whom I can not do without, and to attach myself to one or two who are outside my range, or, rather, to a fanciful desire for things that I can not obtain? My easy nature, opposed to all sharpness and bitterness, may well have freed me from envies and enmities. No man ever gave more occasion, I do not say to be loved, but not to be hated; but the coldness of my manner has rightfully prevented me from being liked by many persons, who are excusable for interpreting it in another and worse sense.

[1] These lines have an apparent, but not a real, inconsistency with what Montaigne says elsewhere about his great sociability.

[2] *Il me les faut trier sur le volet.*

[3] *Les plus desliées.*

[4] Cf. Seneca, *Epistles* 14 and 103.

[5] This is with the "humble and ordinary."

[6] See Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, I, 3.3.

I am exceedingly capable of acquiring and retaining rare and admirable friendships, inasmuch as I grasp very eagerly the acquaintances which suit my taste; I make such advances, I throw myself upon them so eagerly, that I rarely fail to fasten myself to them and to make the impression I desire. I have often had happy proof of this. In ordinary friendships I am somewhat sterile and cold, for going forward is not natural to me unless under full sail; besides that my fortune, having led and sweetly allured me in my youth to a sole and perfect friendship, did in some sort give me a distaste for others, and impressed too deeply in my imagination that friendship is a creature for companionship, but not of a herd, as that ancient writer says;[1] also that I have an inborn difficulty in giving myself by half and with reservations, and with that servile and suspicious prudence that is enjoined upon us in the maintenance of numerous imperfect friendships. And it is especially enjoined upon us in these days, when we can not speak of what passes in the world [2] except at our peril or falsely. Nevertheless, I see clearly that he who, like myself, aims at the comforts of life (I mean the essential comforts) should avoid like the plague this fastidiousness and sensitiveness of humour. I should praise a soul of divers levels, which can both ascend and descend,[3] which is well off wherever its fortune bears it, which can talk with its neighbour of his building, of his hunting, and of his quarrels, and converse with pleasure with a carpenter and a gardener. I envy those who know how to be familiar with the humblest of their suite and to carry on conversation with those of their train.

(*c*) And Plato's advice does not please me, to speak always in the tone of a master to one's servant, without jesting, without familiarity, whether they be men or whether they be women;[4] for, besides my previous reason, it is inhuman and unjust to give so much weight to this accidental prerogative of fortune, and the forms of government in

[1] *Beste de compaignie, mais non pas de troupe.* See Plutarch, *Of the plurality of friends.*

[2] *Qu'il ne se peut parler du monde.*

[3] *Qui sçache et se tendre et se desmonter.*

[4] See Plato, *Laws*, book VI.

which least disparity is permitted between servants and masters seem to me the most equitable.

(*b*) Others study to push forward and lift up their minds, I to lower mine and draw it in;[1] it is unsound only when stretched too far.

> Narras, et genus Æaci,
> Et pugnata sacro bella sub Ilio;
> Quo Chium pretio cadum
> Mercemur, quis aquam temperet ignibus,
> Quo præbente domum, et quota,
> Pelignis caream frigoribus, taces.[2]

Thus, as Lacedæmonian valour had need of being moderated, and being soothed in battle by the sweet and gentle notes of flutes, for fear that it should be precipitated into rashness and madness,[3] whereas all other nations ordinarily make use of shrill, loud sounds and voices which excite and inflame to the utmost degree the courage of the soldiers, in the same way, it seems to me, contrary to the common idea, that in the use of our mind we for the most part have more need of lead than of wings, of coolness and of quietness than of ardour and of action. Above all, it is to my thinking playing the part of a fool to play the part of a man of wide information[4] among those who are not so; to speak always formally, *favellar in punta di forchetta*.[5] You should descend to the level of those with whom you are, and sometimes affect ignorance. Lay aside strength and cunning; for ordinary usage it is enough to retain coherence; for the rest, keep as close to the ground as they like.[6]

[1] *Les autres s'estudient à eslancer et guinder leur esprit; moy, à le baisser et coucher.*

[2] You talk of the genealogy of Æacus, and of the battles waged under the walls of sacred Ilion; but you are silent about the price at which we are to buy a cask of Chian wine, or who shall heat water for my bath, or who shall offer me, and when, shelter from Peligian cold. — Horace, *Odes*, III, 19.3.

[3] See Plutarch, *How to restrain anger.*

[4] *De faire l'entendu.*

[5] To speak on the point of a fork; that is, in subtle and carefully chosen words.

[6] *Trainez-vous au demeurant à terre, s'ils veulent.*

Men of learning easily stumble over this stone; they are always making a parade of their authority and strew their books everywhere. In these days their voices have so resounded in the rooms and the ears of ladies, that if they [1] have not retained their substance, they have at least the air of having done so; in every sort of talk and matter, however mean and commonplace it be, they make use of a new and learned fashion of speaking and writing, —

> Hoc sermone pavent, hoc iram, gaudia, curas,
> Hoc cuncta effundunt animi secreta; quid ultra?
> Concumbunt docte, — [2]

and produce Plato and St. Thomas as authority about things for which the first comer would serve as well for witness; the instruction that has hardly reached their soul has remained on their tongues. If the well-bred ladies will credit me, they will be content to show the value of their own natural pleasures. They conceal and cover their beauties under the beauties of another; it is great folly to stifle one's own brilliancy in order to shine with a borrowed light; they are interred and entombed under art, (*c*) *de capsula totæ*.[3] (*b*) It shows that they do not know themselves well enough; the world has nothing more beauteous; it is their part to give glory to the arts and to embellish embellishments.[4]

What do they need but to live beloved and honoured? They possess and know only too much for that. There is need only of a little rousing and kindling of the faculties that are in them. When I see them dealing with rhetoric, judicature, and logic, and the like trash, so vain and useless for their concerns, I begin to fear that the men who advise them to do it have authority to rule them on that ground. For what other excuse could I find for them? It is enough that women can without our aid dispose the charm of their eyes

[1] That is, the ladies.

[2] In this style they express their fear, anger, joy, anxiety, and all the secrets of their mind. Can I say more? Learnedly they pass away. — Juvenal, VI, 189. *Concumbunt græce* is the true reading of the last line.

[3] Quite as if from the bandbox. — Seneca, *Epistle* 115. The original text has *totos*.

[4] *De farder le fard.*

to gaiety, to severity, and to gentleness, tempering a "nay" with harshness, with hesitation, and with kindness; and they seek no interpreter for the discourses delivered in their service. With this art they command absolutely and rule both rulers and the school.[1] If, nevertheless, it vexes them to yield to us in any thing whatsoever, and if they wish from curiosity to have a share in books, poetry is an entertainment suited to their need; it is a trifling and sophisticated art, disguised, a matter of words,[2] all pleasure, all show, like themselves. They will also draw divers advantages from history. In philosophy, from the part that is helpful to life, they may receive the teachings which train them to judge of our dispositions and conditions, to defend themselves from our treacheries, to restrain the rashness of their own desires, to use rightly their liberty, to lengthen the pleasures of life, and to bear quietly the inconstancy of a lover, the surliness of a husband, and the pertinacity of age, of wrinkles, and similar matters. Such at the most is the share I would allot to them in the matter of learning.

There are some natures prone to privacy, withdrawal, and introspection. My essential disposition is adapted to communication and production. I am all outward and in sight, born for social life and for friendship. The solitude that I love and that I preach is chiefly for the purpose of drawing back to myself my interests and my thoughts, of restraining and confining, not my steps, but my desires and my cares, giving over all outside solicitude and shunning servitude and bonds, (*c*) and not so much the crowding of men as the crowding of affairs. (*b*) Solitude of place, in truth, tends to give my thoughts a more extensive outlook; I throw myself more freely into affairs of state and into the universe when I am alone. At the Louvre and in the throng I shrink and draw back into my shell. The crowd thrusts me back on myself, and I never converse with myself so rashly, so unrestrainedly, and so privately as in places of respect and ceremonious discretion. It is not our folly that makes me laugh; it is our sapience. By nature I am no enemy to the turmoil of courts; I have passed a part of my life there, and

[1] *Elles commandent à baguette, et regentent les regens et l'eschole.*
[2] *Parlier.*

easily carry myself gaily in large assemblies, provided that it is at intervals and when I am in the mood; but the fastidiousness of judgement whereof I have spoken perforce binds me to solitude. Verily, in my own house, with a numerous household, and one of the most frequented of mansions, I see persons enough, but rarely those with whom I care to hold intercourse; and there I preserve, both for myself and for others, unwonted liberty. There is there a truce to ceremony, to ushering guests on their arrival and accompanying them on their departure,[1] and other such tiresome behests of our courtesy (O servile and annoying custom!). Every one conducts himself there as he pleases; whosoever will, talks freely:[2] I remain dumb, meditative, and withdrawn, without offending my guests.

The men whose society and intimacy I seek are those who may be styled upright and clever men; the figure of these gives me a distaste for others. This is, rightly considered, the rarest of all types, and a type that is due chiefly to nature. The scope of such intercourse is simply familiarity, frequent companionship, and talk: action for our souls, without other gain. In our discourse all subjects are alike to me; it does not matter to me that there is neither weight nor depth in them; charm and pertinence are always present; it is all tinged with ripe and firm judgement, and blended with kindliness, frankness, cheerfulness, and friendship. It is not on questions of law and politics[3] only that our mind shews its beauty and its strength, or in the affairs of kings; it shews it no less in private confabulations. I know my friends even by their silence and their smile, and discern them better, it may be, at table than in the council room. Hippomachus well said that he recognised skilful wrestlers merely by seeing them walk in the street.[4] If learning be pleased to join in our talk, her company will not be refused — not as she usually is, magisterial, imperious, and impor-

[1] *D'assistance et convoiemens.*

[2] *Y entretient qui veut ses pensées.*

[3] *Substitutions.* The meaning of this word is not at all clear. It has been suggested that it refers here to subjects that have "weight and depth."

[4] See Plutarch, *Life of Dion.* Hippomachus was a teacher of wrestling and fencing.

tunate, but subordinate and docile. We are seeking only pastime; when the hour comes to be instructed and preached to, we will go to find her on her throne. Let her descend to our level for the moment if she please; for, most profitable and desirable as she is, I take it for granted that at need we could well dispense with her altogether and do our work without her. A soul well endowed and accustomed to dealing with men becomes of itself agreeable. Art is nothing else than the examination and record of what such souls bring forth.

Intercourse with virtuous women, too, is pleasant to me; (*c*) *nam nos quoque oculos eruditos habemus*.[1] (*b*) If the spiritual nature has not so much enjoyment therein as in the other, the corporeal senses, which participate in this, bring it to a degree approaching that, although in my opinion not equal to it. But it is an intercourse in which we must be somewhat on our guard, especially those in whom the body counts for much, as with me. I was over-hot in my youth, and suffered all the madness that poets say comes upon those who let themselves go in that direction without discipline and without judgement. It is true that that scourging has since served me as instruction:

> Quicunque Argolica de classe Capharea fugit,
> Semper ab Euboicis vela retorquet aquis.[2]

It is folly to fix all one's thoughts on this, and to involve oneself in it with a frantic and ill-judged emotion; but, on the other hand, to enter into it without love and without a binding attraction,[3] like comedians; to play a part belonging to one's age and to custom, and to put into it nothing of oneself but the words — that is truly to provide for one's security, but in very cowardly fashion, like him who should forgo his honour or his profit or his pleasure for fear of danger; for it is certain that, from such a course, they who practise it can not hope for any result which concerns or satisfies a

[1] For we too have experienced eyes. — Cicero, *Paradoxa*, V, 2.

[2] Whoever in the Greek fleet has escaped from the Capharean rocks always turns his sails away from the waters of Eubœa. — Ovid, *Tristia*, I, 1.83.

[3] *Sans obligation de volonté.* He is speaking of a more than external relation with women.

noble soul. What one would in good earnest take pleasure in enjoying must have been in good earnest desired; I mean when fortune unjustly has favoured their dissimulation, which often happens because of the fact that there is not a single woman, however ill-favoured she may be, who does not deem herself attractive, (*c*) who does not think well of herself as to her age, or her hair, or her carriage (for there is none absolutely ugly any more than absolutely beautiful); and the Brahmin maids who lack other attractions — the people being called together by public announcement for this purpose — go to the public square and exhibit themselves, to see if thereby at least they are not worthy to win a husband. (*b*) Consequently there is not one of them who does not allow herself to be easily persuaded by the first man who swears to be her slave.

Now from the common and every-day treachery of the men of to-day, that must needs happen which experience has shown us, namely, that they rally together and fall back on themselves, or among themselves, to avoid us; or else they dispose themselves on their side after the example that we set them, and play their part in the farce and lend themselves to this traffic, without passion, without heed, and without love; (*c*) *neque affectui suo aut alieno obnoxiæ;*[1] thinking, according to the persuasion of Lysias in Plato,[2] that they can abandon themselves to us the more profitably and advantageously, the less we love them. (*b*) It will be with them as with play-actors: the audience will have as much pleasure as themselves, or more. For my own part, I no more recognise Venus without Cupid than motherhood without offspring; these are things which mutually give and owe to each other their essential character. So this imposture reacts on him who is guilty of it; it costs him little, but he gains by it nothing of value. They who made Venus a goddess perceived that her chief beauty was incorporeal and spiritual; but the Venus that such men seek is not merely human, or even bestial. The beasts do not

[1] Without affection himself and insensible to that of others. — Tacitus, *Annals*, XIII, 45.

[2] In the *Phædrus*, near the beginning. Lysias is not speaking of women.

accept her so gross and earthy; we see that imagination and desire often inflame them and urge them, before the body; we see in both the one and the other sex that they have choice and selection among the throng in their inclinations, and that there are between them friendly relations of long liking.[1] Celles mesmes à qui la vieillesse refuse la force corporelle fremissent encores, hannissent et tressaillent d'amour. Nous les voyons avant le faict pleines d'esperance et d'ardeur, et, quand le corps a joué son jeu, se chatouiller encor de la douceur de cette souvenance; et en voyons qui s'enflent de fierté au partir de là, et qui en produisent des chants de feste et de triomphe, lasses et saoules. Qui n'a qu'à descharger le corps d'une necessité naturelle n'a que faire d'y embesongner autruy avec des apprests si curieux: ce n'est pas viande à une grosse et lourde faim.

Comme celuy qui ne demande point qu'on me tienne pour meilleur que je suis, je diray cecy des erreurs de ma jeunesse. Non seulement pour le danger qu'il y a (*c*) de la santé (si n'ay-je sceu si bien faire que je n'en aye eu deux atteintes, legeres toutesfois et preambulaires), (*b*) mais encores par mespris, je ne me suis guere adonné aux accointances venales et publiques: j'ai voulu esguiser ce plaisir par la difficulté, par le desir, et par quelque gloire; et aymois la façon de l'Empereur Tibere, qui se prenoit en ses amours autant par la modestie et noblesse que par autre qualité;[2] et l'humeur de la courtisane Flora, qui ne se prestoit à moins que d'un dictateur ou consul, ou censeur, et prenoit son déduit en la dignité de ses amoureux.[3] Certes les perles et le brocadel y conferent quelque chose, et les tiltres et le trein.

Furthermore, I set great store by the intelligence, but on condition that the body was not to seek; for, to speak in good conscience, if one or the other of those two charms must necessarily be lacking, I should have chosen to let the intellectual go; it has its employment in better things; but, in the matter of love, which has to do principally with the sight and the touch, one can do something without the

[1] *Qu'elles ont entre elles des accointances de longue bienveuillance.*
[2] See Tacitus, *Annals*, VI, 1.
[3] See Antoine de Guevara, *Golden Letters*.

charms of the mind, but nothing without bodily charms. That is the true advantage of women, is (*c*) beauty: it is so wholly theirs that our beauty, although it requires some features a little different, is, at its best, simply indistinguishable from theirs when boyish and beardless. They say that in the Grand Turk's establishment those who are in his service because of their beauty, of whom there is an infinite number, are dismissed at the age of twenty-one at the latest.[1] (*b*) Good sense, wisdom, and the duties of friendship are found more generally among men; therefore they rule the affairs of the world.

These two sorts of intercourse [2] are fortuitous and depend upon others; one is vexatious because of its rarity, the other flags with advancing years; so that they could not have adequately sufficed for the occupation of my life. Intercourse with books, which is the third sort, is much more sure and more ours. It yields to the first two all other advantages, but it has for its share the steadiness and facility of its employ. This is at my side the whole way and assists me everywhere; it comforts me in old age and in solitude; it relieves me from the burden of a wearisome idleness, and rids me at any moment of annoying society; it dulls the sharpness of suffering unless it be extreme and overmastering. To divert me from an unseasonable imagination I need only have recourse to books; they easily turn my thoughts to them, and steal my unwelcome thoughts from me;[3] and they never rebel though they see that I seek them only in default of those other pleasures more real, vivid, and natural; they welcome me always with the same cheer.

It is very well, as the saying is, to go on foot, for one who leads his horse by the bridle; and our James, King of Naples and Sicily, who, handsome, young, and healthy, had himself carried about the country in a barrow, resting on a miserable feather-bed, dressed in a garment of grey cloth and a cap of the same, yet attended by a great regal train, — litters, led horses of all sorts, gentlemen and officials,[4] — ex-

[1] See G. Postel, *Histoire des Turcs*.
[2] That is, intercourse with men and with women.
[3] *Ils me destournent facilement à eux et me la desrobent.*
[4] See Olivier de la Marché, *Mémoires* (1562).

hibited an austerity as yet fickle and tottering; the sick man is not to be pitied who has his cure in his sleeve. In the experience and practice of this very true saying lies all the profit that I derive from books. I use them, in fact, hardly more than they do who do not know them. I enjoy them, as misers their treasures, in knowing that I shall enjoy them whenever I please; my soul is satisfied and content with this right of possession. I do not travel without books in time either of peace or of war. Sometimes several days will pass, and months, without my making use of them. "The time will come," I say, "to-morrow, perhaps, or whenever I please." Meanwhile time flies and is gone without harming me; and it can not be said how much I repose and refresh myself in the reflection that they are at my side to give me pleasure when I will, and in recognising what succour they bring to my life. It is the best provision I have found for this human journey, and I very greatly pity those men of intelligence who lack it. I rather accept any other sort of occupation, however trivial it may be, inasmuch as this can not fail me.

At home I betake myself a little oftener than elsewhere to my library, where I can observe all the affairs of my household. It is above the gateway, and I see below me my garden, my base-court, my courtyard, and look into most of the parts of my house. There I turn the leaves, now of one book, now of another, without order and without plan, in disconnected snatches; sometimes I muse, sometimes I record and dictate my reflections while walking about, as now. (*c*) It [1] is on the third floor of a turret. The first floor is my chapel, the second a bedroom and its appurtenances, where I often sleep, to be alone. Above, it has a large dressing-room; it was in bygone times the most useless part of my house. There I pass both the greater number of the days of my life and most of the hours of the day; I am never there at night. Adjoining is a well-finished small room, where there can be a fire in winter, and it is very agreeably lighted; and if I did not dread the trouble more than the cost, — the trouble that repels me from all labour, — I could easily have added on each side a gallery a hundred paces long and

[1] The library.

twelve wide, on the same level, having found all the walls built for another purpose to the requisite height. Every place for retirement demands a place for walking; my thoughts fall asleep if I seat them; my mind does not go by itself as well as when the legs keep it in motion. They who study without books are all in the same plight.

In shape it [1] is round, and there is no flat wall except what is occupied by my table and my chair; and it presents me, as it curves, all my books at once, arranged on every side in cases with five shelves. It has three prospects, with fine and open views, and it has sixteen paces of vacant space in diameter. In winter I am less continually there; for my house is perched on a little hill, as its name implies, and no part is more exposed to the wind than this. I like the situation, its being a little difficult of access and out of the way, both because of the benefit of the exercise and also as keeping the throng away from me. There is my domain.[2] I endeavour to make my sway there absolute, and to detach this one corner from all community, whether conjugal, filial, or social; everywhere else I have but a verbal authority, immaterial, vague. Miserable is the man, in my opinion, who has in his house no place where he can be alone, where he can especially pay court to himself, where he can hide himself! Ambition fitly requites her followers by keeping them always on exhibition, like a statue in the market-place; *magna servitus est magna fortuna;* [3] they can have no privacy even in their closet.[4] I have judged nothing else to be so severe in the austerity of life that our monks affect as what I see in some of their communities, where the rules require constant companionship and numerous persons present at whatever they do; and I find it somewhat more tolerable to be always alone than never to be able to be so.

(*b*) If some one tells me that it is degrading the Muses to use them only for play and pastime, he knows not as I do how great is the value of pleasure, of sport and pastime; I am very near saying that every other object is ridiculous.

[1] The library. [2] *C'est là mon siege.*

[3] A great fortune is a great bondage. — Seneca, *Consolatio ad Polybium*, XXVI.

[4] *Ils n'ont pas seulement leur retraict pour retraitte.*

I live from day to day, and, speaking with reverence, I live only for myself; my purposes end there. In youth I studied for ostentation; afterward, a little for wisdom; now, for pleasure; never merely for the pursuit of learning.[1] An idle and extravagant inclination that I once had for that sort of furnishing, (*c*) not to provide merely for my necessities, but, beyond that, (*b*) therewith to ornament and adorn myself, I long ago gave over. Books have many agreeable qualities for those who know how to choose them; but no good thing is without ill; it is a pleasure that is not unalloyed and pure any more than other pleasures; it has its disadvantages, and very weighty ones; the mind is exercised therein, but the body, which likewise I have not forgotten to heed, remains meanwhile inactive, is cast down and aggrieved. I know of no excess more injurious for me, or more to be avoided in these declining years.

I note here my three favourite and especial occupations; I say nothing of those which I owe to the world by civic obligation.

CHAPTER IV

OF DISTRACTION[2]

The word and the thought were both unfamiliar in the sixteenth century. Pasquier remarks on the use of the word, and says he does not well understand what it signified in Montaigne's mouth; if he was in doubt about that, he certainly did not well understand what the chapter was about. It would hardly seem to require more brains than Pasquier had to see that Montaigne used the word simply in its Latin sense, and that the Essay tells us how our thoughts are *turned away* from one path to another, from one object of contemplation to another; the ease with which this can be done by ourselves or others being sometimes good-fortune, sometimes ill-fortune.

He himself has succeeded in consoling for the moment a sorrowing lady (whom I fancy to be Diane de Foix, after the death of her young husband and his two brothers on the same day in battle) — in consoling her by gently turning her thoughts from her grief.

And he has lately "diverted" from thoughts of vengeance a young prince, not by preaching Christian forgiveness, or presenting the poetic

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[1] *Pour le quest;* that is, for the sake of more learning.

[2] *De la diversion.*

tragedies of revenge, but by turning him round with his back to this passion and fixing his ambition's eyes on the honour to be gained from clemency. From power of distraction over the passion of vengeance, he passes to its power over the passion of love, and also over the passion of sorrow. Then, to its being the great medicine of Time. And then, with Alcibiades, to its value in giving the change to Rumour.

On a later page the subject turns from the effects of *diversion* to the triviality of the things that divert us from the core of the matter and fix our attention on its surface. And, even, we are affected by merely a surface, as if there *were* a core — witness "the sorrows of Dido and of Ariadne." And our imagination can not fully conceive a sorrow, save when aided by the eyes and ears. Even the eyes and ears alone can create the emotion of sorrow.

Returning to methods of *diversion*, he speaks of the manner by which the women in "a district near our mountains" divert themselves from grief for the loss of their husbands. The inserted passage that follows is admirable. And indeed we need no true cause to divert, to agitate, our senses: it may be done by "a vague imagination." There is nothing in nature but man "over which inanity [that which has no substance] has power." Yet the soul exults over the weakness of the body!

I WAS once employed to console a lady who was truly afflicted; their mourning is usually artificial and conventional.

> Uberibus semper lachrimis, semperque paratis
> In statione sua, atque expectantibus illam,
> Quo jubeat manare modo.[1]

It is an ill-advised course to oppose this emotion, for opposition spurs them on and involves them more deeply in melancholy; the grief is aggravated by anger at the contention. We see in common conversation that if any one ventures to controvert what I may have carelessly said, I take it in dudgeon; I defend it — much more if it be a matter about which I am interested. And also, thus doing, you make a rough beginning of your work; whereas the first addresses of the physician to his patient should be gracious, affable, and agreeable; never did an ill-favoured and sour-looking physician effect any good. Far otherwise, therefore, we must give help at first and countenance their lamentation, and testify to some approbation, and justification for it. By

[1] A woman always has in reserve abundant tears, awaiting a signal from her to flow. — Juvenal, VI, 272.

such sagacity you gain ground to go further, and by an easy and imperceptible transition you glide into more stable discourse proper for their cure.

I, whose chief desire was only to beguile the bystanders, who had their eyes upon me, thought it best to apply a plaster. For I find by experience that I have an unskilful and ineffective hand in persuading. Either my reasonings are too sharp and too dry, or I present them too abruptly or too carelessly. After I had for a time followed the humour of her suffering, I did not attempt to cure her by strong and keen reasonings, because I lacked such, or because I thought to produce a better effect by other means; (*c*) nor did I choose the various methods of consolation that philosophy prescribes: that the thing lamented about is not an ill, like Cleanthes;[1] that it is a slight ill, like the Peripatetics; that to lament is neither a lawful nor a praiseworthy action, like Chrysippus; nor this precept of Epicurus,—which is nearer my way of thinking,—to transport the thought from disagreeable to delightful things; nor to make a collection of all these together, employing such as occasion offers, like Cicero; (*b*) but all gently turning our talk, and gradually leading it to subjects near at hand, and then to a little more distant ones, according as she followed me, I imperceptibly took away from her that grievous thought and left her cheerful and altogether tranquillised as long as I was there. I made use of distraction. They who followed me in this same office found no amendment in her, for I had not laid the axe to the root.

(*c*) I have by chance treated elsewhere[2] of some ways of diverting the course of public affairs. And the military methods of which Pericles availed himself in the Peloponnesian War,[3] and a thousand others at other times, to cause hostile forces to withdraw from their country, are frequent enough in histories.

(*b*) That was a crafty avoidance of disaster by which the sieur de Himbercourt saved himself and others in the city

[1] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, III, 31, for all these "methods."

[2] See Book II, chap. 33.

[3] Cf. Plutarch, *Life of Pericles*, XXII. If Montaigne had this passage in mind, his memory was somewhat at fault.

of Liége, whither the Duke of Burgundy, who held it besieged, had sent him to sign the conditions of the capitulation agreed upon. The people, having assembled at night to arrange for this, began to rebel against the agreed terms; and many of them proposed to fall upon the negotiators whom they had in their power. He, feeling the wind of the first wave of those men who had rushed to his quarters, immediately sent out to them two of the inhabitants of the city (for there were some of them with him) entrusted with milder new offers to propose to their council, which he had invented on the instant to meet his need. These two arrested the oncoming tempest, leading the excited mob to the city hall, to hear what was to be said and deliberate thereon. The deliberation was short: behold, there broke a second storm as violent as the first; upon which he despatched to meet them four new intercessors with like instructions, declaring that this time they had it in charge to lay before them yet more fruitful terms, altogether for their contentment and satisfaction; whereby the people were again sent to consult together. The result was that, by so disposing these delays, diverting their rage and dissipating it in idle consultations, he lulled it to sleep at last and gained the twenty-four hours,[1] which was his main object.

This other tale is also in this category.[2] Atalanta, a maiden of surpassing beauty and of wonderful activity, to rid herself of the throng of a thousand suitors who sought her in marriage, pronounced this decree: that she would accept him who should equal her in a foot-race, on condition that they who failed to do so should lose their lives. There proved to be enough who regarded the prize as worthy of such a risk, and who incurred the penalty of that cruel bargain. Hippomenes, having to make his attempt after the others, appealed to the tutelary goddess of lovers,[3] calling her to his aid; and she, lending a favourable ear to his prayer, supplied him with three golden apples and instructed him how to use them. The race having begun, as Hippomenes feels his mistress close on his heels, he lets fall one of

[1] *Gaigna le jour.* See Commines, II, 3.
[2] That is, in the category of crafty devices.
[3] *La deesse tutrisse de cette amoureuse ardeur.*

the apples, as if inadvertently. The maiden, attracted by its beauty, fails not to go out of her way to pick it up;

> Obstupuit virgo, nitidique cupidine pomi
> Declinat cursus, aurumque volubile tollit.[1]

He did the like at the right moment with the second and the third, until, by dint of her straying and turning aside,[2] the victory in the race remained with him.[3] When the physicians can not clear away an affection of the brain,[4] they divert it and turn it aside to some less dangerous part. I observe that this is also the most common prescription for diseases of the mind. (*c*) *Abducendus etiam nonnunquam animus est ad alia studia, solicitudines, curas, negotia; loci denique mutatione, tanquam ægroti non convalescentes, sæpe curandus est.*[5] (*b*) We can with difficulty make it confront ills directly. We can make it neither support nor repel the blow; we make it shun it and turn aside.

The other lesson [6] is too lofty and too difficult. It is for those of the first order of mind to pause steadfastly on the thing, to consider it, to judge it. It belongs to a Socrates alone to meet death with an every-day countenance, to be familiar with it and to play with it. He seeks no consolation outside the thing; dying seems to him a natural and indifferent occurrence; he fastens his eyes directly upon it and deliberates upon it without looking elsewhere. The disciples of Hegesias, who starved themselves to death, inflamed by the noble teachings of his lessons, — (*c*) and in such numbers that King Ptolemy forbade him to occupy his school further with those homicidal discourses,[7] — (*b*) these

[1] The maiden was astonished, and in her desire for the shining apple swerved from her course, and picked up the rolling gold. — Ovid, *Metam.*, X, 666.

[2] *Fourvoyement et divertissement.*

[3] Montaigne probably took the whole story from Ovid.

[4] *Catarre;* formerly the term for apoplexy.

[5] The mind should sometimes be distracted by other interests, affairs, pursuits, and occupations; it may often be cured, like sick men not yet convalescent, by a change of place. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, IV, 35.

[6] To make it confront ills directly.

[7] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, I, 34; Valerius Maximus, VIII, 9, *ext.* 3.

did not consider death in itself, they passed no judgement upon it; it is not on it that their thought rested; they ran toward a new existence, on which their eyes were fixed.[1] Those poor men whom we see on the scaffold, filled with ardent devotion, and there employing, as much as in them lies, all their senses,— their ears in attention to the instructions given them, their eyes and hands upraised to heaven, their voices in loud prayers with vehement and unceasing emotion,— do what is certainly praiseworthy and suitable in such a hard strait. We should praise them for piety, but not properly for resolution. They shun the struggle, they turn their thoughts away from death, just as we keep children amused when the lancet is to be used on them. I have seen some men whose heart failed them, if for a moment their sight fell upon the horrible preparations for death that surrounded them, and who, in a frenzy, turned their thoughts elsewhere. We bid those who are crossing a terrifying abyss to close their eyes or turn them away.

(*c*) Subrius Flavius, being about to be put to death by order of Nero, and at the hands of Niger,[2] — both being army commanders, — when they led him to the field where the execution was to take place, and he saw that the hole that Niger had dug to put him in was irregular and ill shaped, "Even this," he said, turning to the soldiers who were present, "is not according to military regulations." And to Niger, who exhorted him to hold his head firmly, "Do you but strike as firmly"; and he divined rightly, for Niger's arm, trembling, had to give several strokes. This man seems to have had his thoughts wholly and fixedly on the subject. (*b*) The man who dies in the mellay, sword in hand, does not at that moment give his mind to death; he neither is conscious of it nor considers it; the ardour of the combat carries the day. A gentleman[3] of my acquaintance having fallen as he was fighting in an enclosure, and conscious of being stabbed nine or ten times by his opponent while prostrate, every one present called to him that he should think of his conscience; but he told me afterward

[1] *Ils courent, ils visent à un estre nouveau.*

[2] Niger was to cut off his head. See Tacitus, *Annals*, XV, 67.

[3] *Un honneste homme.*

that, although these words reached his ears, they in no wise affected him, and that he never thought of any thing save disengaging himself and being revenged; he killed his man in this same combat. (*c*) He who brought the sentence of death to L. Sillanus did him a great service; for, having heard his reply, that he was quite ready to die, but not by a villainous hand, he, to force him, attacked him with his soldiers; and as Sillanus, wholly unarmed, defended himself obstinately with fists and feet, the other put him to death in that contest, changing into sudden tumultuous anger the painful thoughts of the prolonged and prearranged death to which he was destined. (*b*) We think always of something else: the hope of a better life stays and supports us, or the hope of our children's worth, or the future renown of our name, or the escape from the ills of this life, or the vengeance which menaces those who cause our death.

> Spero equidem mediis, si quid pia numina possunt,
> Supplicia hausurum scopulis, et nomine Dido
> Sæpe vocaturum. . . .
> Audiam, et hæc manes veniet mihi fama sub imos.[1]

(*c*) Xenophon, wreath on head, was offering sacrifice, when they came to tell him of the death of his son Gryllus at the battle of Mantinea. On first hearing the news, he threw his wreath to the ground; but, so the tale continues, learning the nature of a most valiant death, he picked it up and replaced it on his head.[2] (*b*) Even Epicurus finds consolation in his last hours in the immortality and usefulness of his writings.[3] (*c*) *Omnes clari et nobilitati labores fiunt tolerabiles.*[4] And Xenophon says that the same wound, the same toil, does not weigh so heavily on a general as on a

[1] I hope truly that, if kind gods have any power, you will be punished by suffering shipwreck, and will call often on the name of Dido. . . . I shall hear, and the report of your death will come to me among the shades. — Virgil, *Æneid*, IV, 382–384, 387.

[2] See Valerius Maximus, IV, 10, *ext.* 2; Diogenes Lærtius, *Life of Xenophon.*

[3] See Cicero, *De Fin.*, II, 30; Diogenes Lærtius, *Life of Epicurus.* And see Book II, chap. 16 (p. 22, *supra*), where Montaigne quotes the letter of Epicurus here referred to.

[4] All toils that bring fame and glory can be endured. — Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 24.

common soldier.[1] Epaminondas accepted his death far more cheerfully when he was informed that the victory remained on his side.[2] *Hæc sunt solatia, hæc fomenta summorum dolorum.*[3] (*b*) And other like circumstances occupy us and divert us and turn our thoughts away from consideration of the thing in itself.

(*c*) Verily the arguments of philosophy continually skirt and avoid this subject and scarcely break its crust. The greatest man of the greatest school of philosophy, which was the guiding influence [4] of the others, the great Zeno, said about death: "No bad thing is honourable; death is honourable; therefore it is not a bad thing"; [5] and about drunkenness: "No man entrusts his secret to the drunkard; every one entrusts it to the wise man; therefore the wise man is not a drunkard." [6] Is this hitting the mark? I like to see these lofty souls unable to free themselves from our fellowship; perfect men as they may be, they are still very unintelligently men.[7]

(*b*) Vengeance is a pleasant passion, of great and natural influence; this I see plainly, although I have no experience of it. To divert a young prince therefrom, not long ago, I did not tell him that to him who has struck one cheek we must turn the other, from the duty of charity; nor did I set before him the tragic results that poetry attributes to that passion. I left all that on one side and busied myself in making him savour the beauty of a contrary image: the honour, the favour, the good-will which he would acquire by clemency and kindness; I turned him aside to ambition. That is the way to do. If your emotion in love be too powerful, disperse it, they say; and they say well, for I have often tried this with profit; break it up into various desires, of which let one be the chief and master, if you will; but for fear that this one may domineer and tyrannise over you, weaken it, intermit it, by dividing and diverting it;

[1] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, II, 26.

[2] See *Ibid.*, II, 24.

[3] These are the consolations, the alleviations, of the greatest sufferings. — *Ibid.*

[4] *Surintendante.*

[5] See Seneca, *Epistle* 82.

[6] See Idem, *Epistle* 83.

[7] *Ce sont toujours bien lourdement des hommes.*

Cum moroso vago singultiet inguine vena,[1]
Conjicito humorem collectum in corpora quæque;[2]

and look to this in good time, for fear that you may be in trouble from it, if it have once seized upon you;

Si non prima novis conturbes vulnera plagis,
Volgivagaque vagus venere ante recentia cures.[3]

I was in other days touched by a sorrow overpowering for one of my temperament, and even more legitimate than overpowering; I should perchance have been lost had I trusted solely to my strength. Having need of something violently different to distract my thoughts, I became by design and by effort a lover, wherein my age assisted me. Love solaced and relieved the pain that had been caused me by friendship. In all things else it is the same: a bitter thought holds me; I find it shorter to change it than to overcome it; I substitute another for it — if I can not a contrary one, at least a different one; the variation always solaces, dissolves, and dissipates it. If I can not combat it, I escape from it, and in flying from it I turn one way and another,[4] I use stratagems; changing place and occupation and companionship, I take refuge in the throng of other employments and thoughts, where it loses my traces and goes astray.

This is the course of Nature by the good offices of variability; for time, which she has given us as the chief physician for our troubles, produces its effect principally thus, that by presenting other and still other subjects to our mind, it clears away and destroys that first conception, however strong it may be. A thoughtful man[5] sees his dying friend but little less at the end of five and twenty years than in the first year, (*c*) and, according to Epicurus, not at all less, for

[1] When your wayward heart throbs with violent desires. — Persius, VI, 73.

[2] Discharge your passion elsewhere. — Lucretius, IV, 1065. The original text has *Et jacere* for *Conjicito*.

[3] Unless you combine with the first wounds new blows, and efface the first impressions by unrestrained vagrancy. — *Ibid.*, 1070.

[4] *Je fourvoye*.

[5] *Un sage*. The first publication of this Essay (1588) was just five and twenty years after La Boëtie's death.

he attributed no alleviation of afflictions either to the anticipation of them or to their ancientness; [1] (*b*) but so many other thoughts come in the way of this one that at last it languishes and fades away. To divert the tendency of common rumours, Alcibiades cut off the ears and tail of his beautiful dog, and drove him into the public square, so that, on his giving this subject to the populace to gossip about, they would leave his other actions in peace.[2] I have likewise seen women with this same purpose cloak their real emotions with counterfeit emotions, to divert people's opinions and conjectures and to mislead the tattlers. But I have known one of them who, thus counterfeiting, suffered herself to take it in earnest and forsook the true and original feeling for the pretended one; and I learned by her that those [3] who find themselves well lodged are fools to consent to this disguise. Public welcomes and interviews being reserved for the visible suitor,[4] be sure that he is far from clever if he does not in the end put himself into your place and send you into his. (*c*) This is in effect to cut and sew a shoe for another to wear.

(*b*) Trifles distract and divert us, for trifles restrain us. We scarcely regard any subjects in their whole extent and by themselves; it is their surroundings, or trivial and superficial images of them, that strike us, and meaningless externals that are shaped by all subjects, —

> Folliculos ut nunc teretes æstate cicadæ
> Linquunt.[5]

Even Plutarch lamenting for his daughter thinks of the pretty ways of her childhood.[6] The memory of a farewell, of an act, of a special charm, of a last injunction, afflicts us. Cæsar's mantle disquieted all Rome, which his death had not done.[7] Even the sound of names, entering into our ears: My poor master! or, My great friend! Alas, my dear

[1] See Cicero, *Tusc. Disp.*, III, 15.
[2] See Idem, *Life of Alcibiades.*
[3] That is, the lovers.
[4] *Serviteur apostê* (literally, posted for a bad purpose).
[5] Like the smooth coats that crickets shed in summer. — Lucretius, V, 803.
[6] See Plutarch, *Letter of consolation to his wife.*
[7] See Idem, *Life of Antony.*

father! or, My sweet daughter! — when these repeated utterances pain me, and I regard them closely, I find that they are verbal lamentations; I am bruised by the words and the tone, as the exclamations of preachers often move their auditors more than their reasonings do; and as we are struck by the piteous cries of a beast that is being killed for our use; [I am pained] without, meanwhile, weighing or fathoming the true essence and validity of my subject;

His se stimulis dolor ipse lacessit; [1]

these are the bases of our sorrow.

(*c*) The obstinacy of my stones, especially in the male member, has sometimes caused me long suppression of urine, — for three or four days, — and brought me so near death that it had been folly to hope to escape it, indeed to wish to do so, considering the cruel assaults this state exposes me to. Oh, what a past master in the science of torture was that excellent emperor [2] who caused the members of his criminals to be bound, in order to cause their death because they could not pass water! Finding myself in this condition, I reflected by what trivial causes and objects my imagination nourished in me regret for life; of what atoms the burden and difficulty of this dislodging was composed in my soul; how many frivolous thoughts we give place to about so great a matter: a dog, a horse, a book, a glass — and what not? — counted for something in my loss; with others, no less foolishly in my opinion, their ambitious hopes, their purse, their learning. I view death carelessly when I view it universally as the end of life. I domineer over it as a whole; in its details, it preys upon me; the tears of a servant, the distribution of my cast-off clothes, the touch of a familiar hand, a commonplace consolation, discomfort me and weakens me.

(*b*) In like manner the lamentations in fictions agitate our souls; and the sorrows of Dido and Ariadne afflict even those who do not believe the narratives of Virgil and Catullus.[3] (*c*) It is a sign of an unyielding and hard nature to feel

[1] It is by these incitements that grief is aroused. — Lucan, II, 42.

[2] Tiberius. See Suetonius, *Life of Tiberius*.

[3] See the *Æneid*, IV; and Catullus, *Epithalamium Pelei et Thetidos*.

no emotion about such things as are told of Polemo as something wonderful; but also he did not even turn pale at the bite of a mad dog which tore away the calf of his leg.[1] (*b*) And no intelligence so completely conceives by its insight the occasion of sadness so keen and unbroken that the apprehension of it is not increased by being present, when the eyes and the ears have their share in its recognition — organs which are not called into play by merely idle incidents.[2]

Is it reasonable that even the arts should make use of and profit by our natural weakness and stupidity? The orator, the art of rhetoric declares, will in the play of his pleading be moved by the sound of his own voice and by his feigned agitation, and himself will be imposed upon by the passion he represents; he will himself be impressed with real and sincere grief, by means of the jugglery that he is performing, to transmit it to the judges, whom it concerns even less; like those persons who are hired for funerals to assist in ceremonial of mourning; who sell their tears by weight and measure, and their sadness; and although they assume a borrowed manner,[3] yet by dint of practising and arranging their expression, it is certain that they are often completely carried away and are affected with genuine melancholy.

I, with several other friends of his, escorted the body of monsieur de Grammont to Soissons from the siege of La Fère, where he was killed.[4] I observed that, wherever we passed, the inhabitants we met overflowed with lamentations and tears, at the sight of the character of our convoy; for even the name of the dead man was not known to them.

[1] See Diogenes Lærtius, *Life of Polemo*.

[2] The text of this difficult sentence is: *Et nulle sagesse ne va si avant de concevoir la cause d'une tristesse si vive et entiere par jugement, qu'elle ne souffre accession par la presence, quand les yeux et les oreilles y ont part, parties qui ne peuvent estre agitées que par vains accidens.*

[3] *Qu'ils s'esbranlent en forme empruntée.*

[4] Philibert, comte de Grammont et de Guiche, was the husband of "La belle Corisande," to whom Montaigne dedicated the chapter that originally contained the 29 sonnets of La Boëtie (Book I, chap. 29). When Montaigne left Paris for his journey to Italy he went first to the siege of La Fère (1580), where M. de Grammont was killed. A note in his handwriting, under date of August 6, in the *Ephemerides*, records the death and the fact that he was present.

(*c*) Quintilian says that he had seen actors who had so deeply entered into a mourning part that they continued to weep at home; and of himself he says that, having undertaken to arouse some passion in others, he had espoused it to the point of finding himself surprised not only by tears but by the pallor and bearing of a man really overwhelmed by grief.[1]

(*b*) In a region near our mountains the women play priest Martin;[2] for while they augment their regret for the husband they have lost by recalling the good and attractive qualities he had, with the same breath they gather up and publish his imperfections; as if to find some compensation for themselves and to pass from tenderness to contempt. (*c*) With much better grace, indeed, than we, who, at the loss of any one we know, pride ourselves on bestowing upon him new and false laudations, and on making him quite other when we have lost him from sight than he seemed to us to be when we saw him; as if regret brought information, or as if tears, by washing our understanding, enlightened it. I now renounce the favourable testimony people would give me, not because I am worthy of it, but because I am dead.

(*b*) If some one is asked: "What interest have you in this siege?" he will reply: "The interest of example and of general obedience to the prince; I look for no profit whatever from it, and as for glory, I know how small a portion falls to a common soldier like me; I have here no personal trouble or quarrel." But see him on the morrow, in his post for the assault, transformed, chafing, and crimson with wrath; it is the glittering of all that steel and the flashing and the rattling of our cannon and our drums that have infused this new sternness and hate into his veins. A frivolous cause! you will say. How a cause? There is none needed to excite our soul; a mere thought, without substance and without object, sways it and excites it. If I set about building castles in Spain, my imagination devises for me agreeable ideas and pleasures by which my soul is really touched with enjoyment, and gladdened. How often do we encumber our

[1] See Quintilian, *Inst. Orat.*, VI, 2.

[2] A proverbial expression founded on the tale of a priest named Martin, who acted both as priest and acolyte in saying mass.

minds with anger or sadness by such shadows, and involve ourselves in imaginary passions which change both the soul and the body! (*c*) What amazed, amused, confused expressions pass over our faces when dreaming awake! What sudden starts and agitations are there of limbs and voice! Does it not seem as if this man, quite alone, has false visions of a throng of other men with whom he is doing business, or of some internal demon that is persecuting him? (*b*) Enquire of yourself where is the occasion of this change: is there any thing in nature but ourselves that feeds on nothingness, over which nothingness has any power?

Cambyses, because he dreamed while sleeping that his brother was to become King of Persia, had him put to death — a brother whom he loved and in whom he had always had confidence.[1] Aristodemus, King of the Messenians, killed himself because of a fanciful idea that he conceived of evil augury from I know not what howling of his dogs;[2] and King Midas did the same, being disturbed and angered by some unpleasant dream that he had dreamed.[3] To abandon one's life for a dream is to value it for just what it is. But here our soul triumphs at the wretchedness of the body and its weakness and its being exposed to all sorts of injuries and changes; in truth, it has good reason so to speak!

O prima infelix fingenti terra Prometheo!
Ille parum cauti pectoris egit opus.
Corpora disponens, mentem non vidit in arte;
Recta animi primum debuit esse via.[4]

[1] See Herodotus, III, 30; Plutarch, *Of Brotherly Love*.
[2] See Plutarch, *Of Superstition*. [3] See *Ibid*.
[4] O unfortunate primal clay fashioned by Prometheus! He shewed little wisdom in the execution of his work. Framing the body only, he did not see the mind in his art; he ought to have begun with the mind. — Propertius, III, 5.7.

END OF VOLUME THREE